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DAVID COPPERFIELD



Charles Dickens

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Corporate & Editorial Office
A-12, Sector 64, Noida 201 301
Uttar Pradesh, India
Phone: +91 120 477 4100
Email: editorial@ombooks.com
Website: www.ombooksinternational.com

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Adapted by Subhojit Sanyal
Illustrations: Dipankar, Manoj Kumar Prasad

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Chapter One

The First Few Things I Remember

I have heard later in my life that I was born on a Friday, exactly at midnight. As a matter of fact, if tales are to be believed, the minute the clock struck twelve, I started to cry.

But the more interesting thing happened the day before I was born. It was late afternoon and the sun was almost about to go down, when my mother was sitting in the living room and warming herself by the fire. She was thinking about what lay for her in the future, with a newborn baby on the way. And then suddenly, with no warning at all, there was this woman pressing her nose against the window of the living room, till her nose lay flat against the glass and her breath fogged up the little spot below. My mother, who was lost in her own world earlier, could not understand what the woman was looking at and she got up very quickly to deal with the woman, and in the process, she fainted right there.

It was some time before she came to and as soon as she opened her eyes, she found the strange old lady standing right in front of her. She was my father's aunt, Miss Trotwood, or you could call her Miss Betsey, since that is what my mother called her. I remember my mother telling me that Miss Betsey loved my father very much — but when she learnt that my father was marrying a girl who wasn't even twenty years of age, she went away to her cottage in the cliffs by the sea, and she never came to see my father again. Six months before I was born, my father left this world forever and she could never see him again. Therefore, no one in my family had seen her since then. Until that day.



As my mother tried to regain her composure, Aunt Betsey began, “Good to see you again, my dear... now, we need to talk about what happens after the girl is born!”

My mother timidly interrupted her and said, “It could also be a boy!”

“No!” roared Aunt Betsey, “It cannot be a boy, it just has to be a girl. I am warning you, nothing other than a girl will do. Once she is born, we shall name her Betsey Trotwood Copperfield and...”

But my mother, terrified of the way in which Aunt Betsey was behaving, murmured to herself, “Oh, I don’t think I can do this. Oh! I feel faint, I think I am about to die.”

Aunt Betsey immediately came forward and held her hand and wiping the sweat off her brow, she said, “Don’t worry, you little child, you’ll be fine. Come, have some tea with us and I am sure you will be able to gain back your strength!” and then turning towards the parlour, she cried, “Peggotty, come here now and bring some tea with you. Your mistress is feeling quite faint and tired.”

And I can just imagine my dear, sweet Peggotty, coming into the parlour, all jiggling and bouncing, with the tea tray in her hand. As soon as she served my mother and Aunt Betsey their tea in the parlour, she got busy lighting the candles since it had already grown quite dark by then. As she got a better look at my mother, she decided it was time to send for the doctor.

It was quite some hours after that when Dr. Chillip finally walked out from inside and brought news of my birth to the people standing in the parlour. It took some time for it to sink to my aunt that I was indeed a boy, and when it finally did, it wasn’t a pretty sight. She just tossed her bonnet hard at the poor doctor and stormed out of the room. We never got to see her again after that day.

And so I came into this world.



I had vivid recollections of my mother, the way she would dance with me in the parlour with her long locks falling all over her face and her shapely figure tossing and turning to the rhythm of our songs, and then I also remember Peggotty, sitting in the parlour with us, smiling away as she carried on with her knitting, with her dark eyes staring at us, and her shapeless body just sitting there.

I had a happy childhood with my mother and Peggotty. I admit that there were times when I saw the graveyard from my bed, which had been kept in my mother's room, and I would think to myself whether my father's tombstone there could use some company. But then I spent all my time with my mother, and I remember sitting next to her, as she twirled and curled her locks with her fingers and how I learnt to sing from her, even as she helped me learn my lessons. I remember, she would always call me, "My dear little Davy!"



Chapter Two

A New Beginning

I remember that day very clearly. I was sitting in the parlour, along with my dear Peggotty and I was reading out to her from a book on crocodiles. I doubt if I was doing a good job with my reading, because Peggotty kept referring to “crokindills” as some kind of vegetable.

And then I saw him again. It was the same gentleman who had accompanied us from church last Sunday. He had come to call on my mother again. His name was Mr. Murdstone and I have no qualms in saying that I didn’t care one bit for him. And truth be told, I saw a rather strange look come upon Peggotty too, every time he called on us.

Mr. Murdstone kept visiting my mother from time to time, and I was not growing too fond of the idea. Then one day, after almost two months of Mr. Murdstone’s continuing visits, Peggotty spoke to me about going with her to her brother’s home in Yarmouth.

“Oh its situated right on the beach, and you’ll see boats and fishermen, and the ocean is right there before you...and of course, you’ll also be meeting my dear cousin, Ham!” Peggotty informed me. I was extremely excited and I was eagerly looking forward to this trip. But when Peggotty told me that the trip to Yarmouth would be for about a fortnight, I got a little upset. “What about Mummy?” I asked her, concerned about my mother’s well-being. “Don’t you worry, Master Davy, your mother’s going on a trip herself.” And just as she said these words, that same strange expression came over her face again.



Our luggage was packed into the carriage that was to take Peggotty and me to Yarmouth the next morning. Both Peggotty and I were still bidding farewell to my mother as the carriage pulled along, and I saw Mr. Murdstone come and stand beside my mother. I did not much appreciate his presence there. Clearly, he shouldn't have intruded on my mother's privacy like that.

I was soon lost in the joy of travelling through the open countryside. Mr. Barkis, our carriage driver, was a rather friendly man who kept Peggotty enthralled with his humorous stories and tales. I never even realised how soon we completed the journey to Peggotty's brother's house in Yarmouth.

I knew we were in Yarmouth as soon as the fresh smell of fish, pitch and the salty air filled my nose. The roads here were now made of stone and I could see sailors everywhere I looked.

Cousin Ham was already there, waiting for us at the town square. I took a great liking to him immediately. Perhaps it was the six feet tall rugged frame and that boyish face that was attached to it that did the trick. He picked me up on his back at once, and taking one of our little boxes under his arm, he led me through the town of Yarmouth towards his house. We passed through boatyards, blacksmiths' forges, riggers' lofts and other such small establishments, before we came to a small little tract of barren land.

Cousin Ham turned his head in my direction as much as he could and said, "Master Davy, here we are... that's my home sweet home!"

I looked in the direction in which he was pointing and tried to find his house. But there was nothing. Why, the only thing that I could see was an upturned barge like thing, which looked like it had been lying there for almost an eternity. I then noticed the windows and doors that had been cut out of it and also saw the smoking iron funnel that stuck out at its roof, what I suspected was the chimney of their house.



“Your house?” I asked Ham to clarify my doubts. “But why, I don’t see anything there but just a small upturned ship!”

“Why Master Davy, that’s me house!” Ham declared again, a smile beaming on his lips.

Right there, even before I could set foot inside that house, I had gone completely mad with excitement. I was going to live in a ship-like house! It looked like it was straight out of a story book about some magical kingdom from far, far away. I could not believe myself.

Peggotty took me to see my bedroom at first. And from the moment I stepped into it, I was just madly in love with it, almost to the point that I never wanted to leave ever. It was small, but just the right size for me to dawdle about, with a window around the region where the rudder of the ship must have earlier gone through. The small bed that was in the room looked like it was made for me, since only I could sleep in there, and the mirror that hung from the wall too was just about made to my size. It was completely unbelievable! I also saw that a small bouquet of seaweed had been kept by the table in the room. Everything was just absolutely perfect!

Once word got around that Peggotty and I had arrived, everyone came around to meet us. We were formally welcomed into the house by an old, but extremely warm lady, who Peggotty introduced to me as Mrs. Gummidge. She was a widow and lived there in the same house and looked after the state of affairs for Mr. Peggotty, Peggotty’s brother.

And there was also a small girl there in the house, I’d say around my age and I must confess that I fell in love with her sky blue eyes and lovely golden locks of hair almost at once.



Peggotty then introduced me to the young girl and said, "Now Master Davy, this young girl is Emily, and she's my brother's adopted niece. You see, Master Davy, Emily had no one in this world, and just like Ham, she too was an orphan. But my brother, you'll be meeting him in a while, is truly a remarkable soul and he took them both in as soon as he could."

And truth be told, Mr. Peggotty turned out to be every bit as Peggotty had spoken of him. He shook my hands warmly and I could understand at once that he had a heart of gold.

From the next morning onwards, it was just the most wonderful holiday that I had ever spent. As the sun reflected on the small mirror in my room, I was out on the sea shore, playing with Emily as we ran along with the gushing waves and picking up stones as we skipped them along the receding waves. We would also sometimes go out towards the horizon in Ham's boat, and Emily and I would talk about our futures. I remember telling her that I wanted to grow up quickly and take care of my mother, because after all, we just had each other in our lives. And Emily would then go on to tell me about how she wanted to grow up into a fine lady. It was during one of our talks that I learnt about how she had lost her mother very early in her life, and how her father had later drowned at sea.

The fortnight that I spent with Emily brought us very close to each other, and I must confess that I fell very much in love with her, much more than I had when my eyes first met hers. But then the fortnight came to an end, and it was time for me to say goodbye to Emily and all the wonderful people that I had met in Yarmouth.

It is true that I did not miss my mother much during my stay at Peggotty's brother's house, but by the time we were about to come back home, I suddenly warmed up to the fact that I was going to meet my mother again. Mr. Barkis took us back home in his small carriage, and I eagerly anticipated running into my mother's arms as soon as I would get back home. Peggotty though did not seem to be as excited as I was, and I could have sworn that I saw the same strange look on her face like I used to see before, particularly when Mr. Murdstone would come to visit my mother.



I was rather shocked when I did not see my mother standing by the garden path, and I confided my fears to Peggotty. “Mamma ain’t dead, is she Peggotty? She hasn’t left me like Daddy, has she?” Peggotty shook her head sadly and replied, “No Master Davy, your mother is alive and well. It’s just that you now have a new father!”

It seemed like the world had been taken from under my feet. “I don’t want to see anyone, I don’t want a new daddy!” I yelled, making my displeasure well known to Peggotty. Even as she insisted that I come and meet him once, I protested and tried to run away from her grip. But at the same time I also wanted to meet my mother. Therefore, after much coaxing, I finally went into the main hall.

I saw my mother sitting by the fireplace in the parlour and I spied Mr. Murdstone standing right next to her. I could see my mother try to get up and run to me, but then Mr. Murdstone gently touched her shoulders, as if reminding her of something. She then walked up to me gently and somewhat timidly kissed me on my forehead, before she turned and walked back. I was now certain that Mr. Murdstone had asked her to control herself before me!

Then, Mr. Murdstone walked up to me and extended his hand towards me, as we shook hands cordially. But I must admit that I was rather relieved to find my way back up to my room as soon as I could get away from my “new” father.





But my bedroom was no longer where it used to be — I was now to sleep in another room, that too far, far away from my mother. I was naturally devastated, but then there was nothing much that I could do about it.

I remember my mother scrambling to hold me tight whenever he was not around, and looking at her sorry face just made me hate Mr. Murdstone even more. There was no way in which I could respect him even one bit. All Mr. Murdstone wanted was to remake our lives with firmness and discipline, and it just made me feel even more miserable — right till the time my home did not feel like home at all! The only solace that I got was in the kitchen, where I spent my time reading to Peggotty.

And that was not the end of it. After a few weeks, Miss Jane Murdstone, Mr. Murdstone's sister moved in with us as well, and like her brother, she too made it very clear that she was not one bit fond of me. I lived in a state of perennial fear in my own house, and would spend most of my time in my little bedroom, reading the books that belonged to my dear late father.

I would often hear Mr. Murdstone talk to Miss Jane about sending me away to some boarding school as soon as they could — but till then I was to carry on with my studies under my mother's tutelage. Though I was an above average student and I always managed to learn my lessons very well, every time I came to recite my lessons to my mother, Mr. Murdstone's stern face looking at me made me so nervous that I fumbled terribly!

This culminated in him, one day, taking me up to my room to discipline me, so that I fared better in my lessons with my mother. I was rather lost as to what he was trying to imply, when he suddenly picked me up and placed me on his lap and said, "David, I think I need to teach you some manners." And then, even as those words registered in my head, he grabbed a cane and brought it down sharply against my back. Everything around me went dark, as he continued to strike me again and again. I cried in pain and pleaded, "Mr. Murdstone, please Sir, I just get nervous when I see you and Miss Jane. I learn my lessons properly, honestly I do, Sir!" But he continued to bring down that cane on my back and muttered, "This will teach you not to lose your concentration then, won't it David?"

I could hear my mother and Peggotty scream and plead from outside the door, begging Mr. Murdstone to stop. But nothing that they said had any effect on him then. I couldn't take it anymore, and in desperation, I grabbed on to his hand and bit it as hard as I could.

Mr. Murdstone stopped, but only momentarily. From that point onwards he beat me so badly with his cane that I could have sworn that he had every intention of killing me. Finally, after a long, long time, he stopped and walked away from my room, locking me from outside.

I was kept in my room for five days. I wasn't allowed to see my mother, or Peggotty. I would cry and cry till I fell asleep exhausted, and would then get up later and cry again. On the fifth day, I just sat next to the window, staring at the church where my father was buried, as it started to rain. I heard a faint whisper at the door. It was Peggotty. I ran to the door and pressed my ears against the keyhole. "Master Davy!" my darling nurse whispered. "Mr. Murdstone has decided to send you to a boarding school near London. You don't worry about your mother one bit... I'm here to look after her!" And then with a fleeting kiss to the keyhole, Peggotty was gone.

I was finally let out of my prison the next morning. I noticed my mother standing there, staring at me with her pale expression and sad red eyes, as Mr. Murdstone motioned her to not even hug before I left for London.



I was a little happy to see Mr. Barkis loading my bags into his cart and without even saying goodbye to my mother, or Peggotty, I left my house in complete silence.

But we must have only gone down a little distance, when we saw Peggotty waiting there for us. She had managed to get out of the house so that she could meet me one last time before I left. She did not say anything, but just hugged me and kissed me. Then, handing me some cakes, three shilling and two half crowns, along with a small note from my mother, Peggotty was gone before she was missed back at the house.

I spent the rest of my journey talking to Mr. Barkis and I didn't realise it then, but he did ask an awful lot of questions about Peggotty. He also seemed to be happy when I told him that Peggotty was still unmarried and he told me at once to tell her in my letters that "Barkis is willing". I agreed to his request, though it was only much later that I understood that the friendly carriage driver was actually asking Peggotty for her hand in marriage!

London was indeed very far from where I lived and therefore, it wasn't possible for Mr. Barkis to take me right upto London. He left me at the coach station, from where I boarded a night coach which brought me to the big city, to London, in the morning.

London was different from home. In every aspect. People seemed to be perennially busy, and more importantly, there were people everywhere I looked. But even as I tried to look through the milling crowds, I could not find anyone who would be looking for a boy by the name of Copperfield or Murdstone. I did not quite know what to do. Just as I was standing at the coach station, wondering whether I should perhaps start walking back home, I felt someone come up from behind me and tap me on the shoulder. I turned around to find a wiry looking man, with a stern and unfriendly face staring directly at me. "Are you David Copperfield?"



As I nodded blankly at him, he introduced himself as Mr. Mell, and said that he was one of the teachers at Salem House, the boarding school that I had been admitted to. Mr. Mell brought me back to a large, cold building, which was my new school. I learnt soon enough that the holidays were still on at Salem House, and I was to be the only student present during that period. I was being punished by my step-father!

As if that were not enough, my teeth were to be filed on the instructions of my step-father, so that I couldn't bite anyone, and even then, I was to wear a board on my back which read, '*Careful! He bites!*'



Chapter Three

Salem House Begins

Mr. Mell was to be my tutor for the entire month that I spent at Salem House before classes began again. I was attentive in my studies and was progressing quite well. I was getting accustomed to living in a boarding school and I was finally making my peace with living far away from my mother.

A few days before school was to reopen, I was summoned to the headmaster's office. Mr. Creakle, the headmaster of Salem House, looked extremely frightening and I shivered as soon as I first saw him. His bald head, his long nose and his seemingly red hot eyes almost burned a hole right through me.

As soon as I came before him, he grabbed me by the ear and almost pulled me off the floor. I remember him telling me, "Ah! So you are the young gentleman who bites... Your father, Mr. Murdstone has told me all about you and he thinks that you should be made more disciplined. I shall see to it that you become just like him in the years you spend in my wonderful school."

I cannot say that I was relieved as I walked out of his office—he was no different from Mr. Murdstone.

Tommy Traddles was the first boy to come back to school after the vacations were over. I took an instant liking to him and he too grew very fond of me in a short while. As a matter of fact, he was so amused on seeing my sign that he made a joke about it at once, which spared me a great deal of embarrassment.

James Steerforth was six years my senior, but we became extremely good

friends as soon as he came back to Salem House. Steerforth was amazingly handsome to look at and he was also exceptionally good in his studies. He helped me settle down to boarding school life with all the other students, particularly by telling me that it would be a sign of good faith for me to throw a secret feast for all the boys. I gave him the last half-crown that Peggotty had given me the day I left with Mr. Barkis, and Steerforth spent it very well and brought us some currant wine, some biscuits and fruits.



That night, as we all sat around each other on our beds during the feast, the boys included me in all their stories and also informed me about all the teachers at Salem House. I was easily accepted by the rest of the boys in the hostel almost immediately. I don't think I will ever forget that night. It was perhaps the best night of my entire life!

And more than just being accepted by the other boys in the hostel, that night also saw James Steerforth appointing himself as my guardian. He was always there for me whenever I needed help and support and he took great care of me.

I was so overjoyed with his feelings towards me and the way he took care of me that when we finally did go to sleep, I spent quite some time lying on my bed and just staring at a sleeping Steerforth. He was lying on his stomach, with his turned head resting comfortably on his arm. In the days to come, I learnt that that was his most favourite position to sleep in.

We were soon all awake in the early hours of the morning and were ready to begin with our classes. An eerie silence cloaked the entire classroom as Mr. Creakle arrived. As he passed by me, he remarked, "Young man, there is something that I forgot to tell you yesterday... I am well known by all because I too bite!" He did not end up biting anyone, but most of the students in class were severely beaten up by him during the whole day, including me. But one good thing did come of the entire process — because my board came in the way of his cane, I was ordered to take it off.



Tommy Traddles, my poor friend, was the worst offender in Mr. Creakle's books. I don't think that there was even one single day during the entire half-year in Salem House when he was spared the sharp hit of Mr. Creakle's untiring cane! It was the same for all of us. Only James Steerforth was spared every time.

However, the most memorable times at Salem House were spent at night, as we all lay talking and cracking jokes in bed. I remember telling Steerforth about the stories that I read in my late father's books.

"And you still remember all of them?" Steerforth asked me as I spoke to him about it. "Of course! I loved reading those books over and over again!" I told him honestly. Steerforth quickly brokered an arrangement with me. "Copperfield, you're going to tell us one story every night. It'll help us get to sleep better. It'll be like the Arabian Nights. Oh, I am sure that it's going to be great fun!"

And therefore, as per Steerforth's request, I would lie down in bed with all the boys surrounding me, and I would tell them these stories, one for each night. To make them more interesting, I would change my voices for the different characters in the story and I remember Tommy Traddles livening up these story telling sessions by creating some sound effects. It almost seemed like we were enacting a play!

Steerforth would be thrilled with these stories and in return, he helped tutor me in my studies. Not to mention, James Steerforth would also come to my rescue if some of the rotten boys at Salem House tried to bully me around!

Salem House was not known for its academic brilliance, but I managed to do rather well there. After all, this was the first time that I was studying in a proper school and I made complete use of that privilege. I was always counted as being one of the intelligent boys in the class.

The half year was coming to an end, and even though I was very happy at Salem House, I did want to go pay my mother and Peggotty a short visit during the vacations. I was afraid, of course, that Mr. Murdstone would keep me back to suffer another vacation all alone at the school — but as the months turned into weeks and the weeks to days, I finally got a letter from home. I was to go home as soon as school closed for the holidays!



Chapter Four

My Mother

As soon as I got off the night coach from London, I saw Mr. Barkis, my old trusted carriage driver already waiting for me. I was indeed very happy to see him, and it seemed to me then that it had only been a few days before he dropped me at this same spot as I carried on towards London and towards Salem House.

We talked a lot during our ride back to my house. I informed him that I had passed on his message of “*Barkis is willing*” to Peggotty in all the letters that I had written to her. Barkis seemed to be quite pleased on hearing that.

Mr. Barkis helped me bring down all my luggage from the carriage and leaving me at the garden path, he bid me farewell. Even though I was standing before my own house, I didn’t quite feel like going in just yet. I did not want to meet Mr. Murdstone, or Miss Jane Murdstone. Finally, gathering all my courage, I slowly walked towards the door.

As I walked in, I could hear my mother singing in the parlour. I softly tread forward and then I saw one of the most amazing sights that I have ever seen in my entire life — my mother was sitting by the fireplace, singing songs to a small baby that was nestled in my arms. He was my half-brother!

Peggotty was the first to spot me standing by the parlour door and she rushed to take me into her arms. My mother too was overjoyed to see me, and she kissed me and embraced me. Both Mr. Murdstone and his sister had gone out for the evening, so I breathed a sigh of relief. I could finally spend time with my mother and my nurse, and also with my new half-brother.

As we dined, I conveyed Mr. Barkis’ message to Peggotty once again.

My old nurse started to blush at once and said, "Oh, that sly old fox!"

My mother beamed with happiness and exclaimed, "Oh my goodness Peggotty! Why, Mr. Barkis wants to marry you! That is such wonderful news! But you won't leave me and go, will you?"

Peggotty stared at my mother and replied, "Why, I wouldn't leave you for anything in this world, Miss! And even after you throw me out, I shall run to my Master Davy and ask him to take me in!"

"You and I will be together for the rest of our lives Peggotty!" I told my nurse, as she leaned forward to kiss me on the forehead.



Just as we were about to finish with our meals, Peggotty asked, “What happened to Miss Betsy? We never heard from her again... do you think she has finally forgiven Master Davy for being born a boy?”

I looked quizzically at my mother, who smiled gently and replied, “I think it is best we leave Miss Betsy to her house by the sea. Believe me, she would be the last person that I’d want to see around here!” And we all broke into peels of laughter as my mother told me everything about my Aunt Betsey.

When my baby brother awoke, my mother let me hold him in my arms. He was so tiny, I was afraid that I might hurt him by holding him too tight!

That night turned out to be my last night of happiness back at home. Mr. Murdstone made it very clear that I was not to spend any time with Peggotty, least of all dine with her. Miss Jane Murdstone in turn, told me very clearly that I was never to hold my half-brother again. As I spent the rest of my days at home, I only longed to rush back to Salem House, to be with my dear friends again.

And the days whizzed past, and finally it was indeed time for me to go back to school. While I was looking forward to it very much, I was also very sad to leave my mother and Peggotty behind.

Salem House was a welcome change to my situation back at home. Everything was going along smoothly, when two months since my return, I was once again summoned to the Headmaster’s office. Since it was also my tenth birthday, I was expecting some kind of a package from my mother.

However, as soon as I walked in, I found Mrs. Creakle, the wife of the Headmaster sitting before the fireplace. She looked extremely grim and she was holding a letter in her hand. As her eyes fell on me, she got up and came towards me immediately, and taking me in her arms she told me, “I am sorry David, but your mother and your little brother are no more!”





I don't remember much of what happened after that, because I must have slipped into a state of unconsciousness. I just remember crying and crying and crying, like someone had pulled the ground from under my feet. Mrs. Creakle kept me in the headmaster's parlour the whole day, as I would cry and fall asleep, then get up and cry again.

I then said my goodbyes to my friends, Tommy Tradles and James Steerforth and left to attend my mother and brother's funerals. Little did I know then that I would never see my dear friends again!

As soon as I walked up the garden path, I buried myself in Peggotty's thick, fat arms. She looked haggard and pale, probably because she had been continuously attending to my mother during her final hours. I remember thanking my dear nurse for all that she had done for my mother and we both cried a lot as we held on to each other for support.

My mother and my brother were buried beside my father in the church next to my house. I felt alone in this world as I stood there, watching the last rites. I only had Peggotty left in my life now.

After the funeral was done, the first thing that Miss Jane Murdstone did was dismiss Peggotty from her services. She was given a month's notice to leave. I watched the poor old lady try and look for work elsewhere, but she failed miserably in doing so. She finally decided to go back to Yarmouth and live with her brother, Mr. Peggotty.

I was completely ignored by my step-father and step-aunt, and therefore, when Peggotty mentioned that she was going to Yarmouth, I too wanted to go there and meet young Emily. I wanted to open out my heart to her and share with her my woes. When I mentioned this to Miss Murdstone, she was more than happy to get me out of the house. So, in a few days time, Peggotty and I were driven up to Yarmouth in Mr. Barkis' carriage. I did notice that all through the journey, he kept passing endearing glances at Peggotty, who in turn kept blushing at his attention.

My holidays in Yarmouth were spent just like last time. Everyone was extremely kind to me, and they did not mention my mother's passing away even once. I told them all about my days at Salem House and about Traddles and Steerforth, and they all heard my stories with rapt attention.

One day, during my stay at Yarmouth, Peggotty and Mr. Barkis took me and Emily in Barkis' carriage to the church. The two of them then rushed inside, while I waited with Emily outside in the carriage for them. When they

came back after some time, they informed us that they had been married!

Peggotty soon moved into Mr. Barkis' neat little house. But I still remember her telling me, "My dear Master Davy, in this house there will always be a room for you, whether you come visit me tomorrow, or ten years from today. And you will always find your book of crokindills in that room."

I hugged Peggotty, and wept miserably, for I didn't know when I would get to see my dear old nurse again. She was the only family that I had left with me.

When I walked back down the garden path on reaching home, I realised that with my mother's death and Peggotty's departure, it wasn't really my home anymore. I missed the two people I loved the most in this world.





I spent the next few weeks in that house being thoroughly neglected and ignored. The two people in the house with me almost behaved like I never existed. I begged with Mr. Murdstone to send me back to school, because I desperately wanted to get away from that house. But I was told in no unclear terms that school was over for me, as he didn't have the money to pay for my fees.

Finally, I was informed that I would be going to London — not to study, but to work! Mr. Murdstone's friend ran a small little workshop in the big city and I would be working there for a shilling a day. I would have to pay for my own food and clothes and Mr. Murdstone had been kind enough to arrange for my lodgings with a family who lived close by to this workshop. I had just turned ten years old a few months back!



Chapter Five

London and Work

The workshop owned by Mr. Murdstone's friend was a small little warehouse in the dock area. It was located at the bottom of a narrow sloping lane and the work here dealt with bottles. It was in a very poor, dilapidated condition, with rats running through everywhere and a very bad stink perennially trapped inside the damp warehouse.

I was started off with my work the very day that I reached London. There were several other boys who were to work with me and I made friends with them at once. My job, along with those of the other boys, was to wash empty bottles, making sure that we threw away the ones that were even a little damaged, then pasting labels on them and finally fitting them with corks. From morning to evening, this was all that we had to do.



On the very first day, around lunch time, I was ordered by Mr. Grinby, the owner of the bottle workshop, to come into his office. I obediently followed, and as soon as I reached his office, I saw this middle-aged man, with a friendly large face and a smooth bald head stare at me. His clothes seemed to be rather poorly, but he tried to maintain a rather upper class flourish in his entire personality.

“Copperfield, meet Mr. Micawber. Your father has put him in charge of your lodgings. You will be staying with him,” Mr. Grinby told me. I walked up to Mr. Micawber and shook his hand. “Copperfield, eh? It will be my pleasure to have you in my humble home, young man!” Mr. Micawber declared. He then told me that he would return in the evening to take me to his house. He would also then show me the quickest route possible from the workshop to his house. I took an instant liking to the kind Mr. Micawber.

True to his word, my guardian and landlord was back in the evening as my workday came to an end. He led me through a series of lanes and alleys before we came up to a house. Pointing at it with his walking stick, Mr. Micawber asked me, “So David my boy, what do you think of my house?” It was a rather shabby little house, crying desperately for a fresh lick of paint. The first floor hardly had any furniture and was very dark since all the blinds were drawn over the windows.

I later realised that Mr. Micawber was neck deep in debts. Which is why the first floor was made to look like no one lived there, particularly for his creditors who kept calling on him every day. The second floor had just a tad more furniture and that is where I first met Mrs. Micawber and her four children.

The Micawbers were extremely kind and warm people, and even though they hardly ever had any money, they would often invite me to join them at meals, or they would reserve a place for me by the fireplace on cold evenings and nights. What they did not have in money, they made up in their kindness.

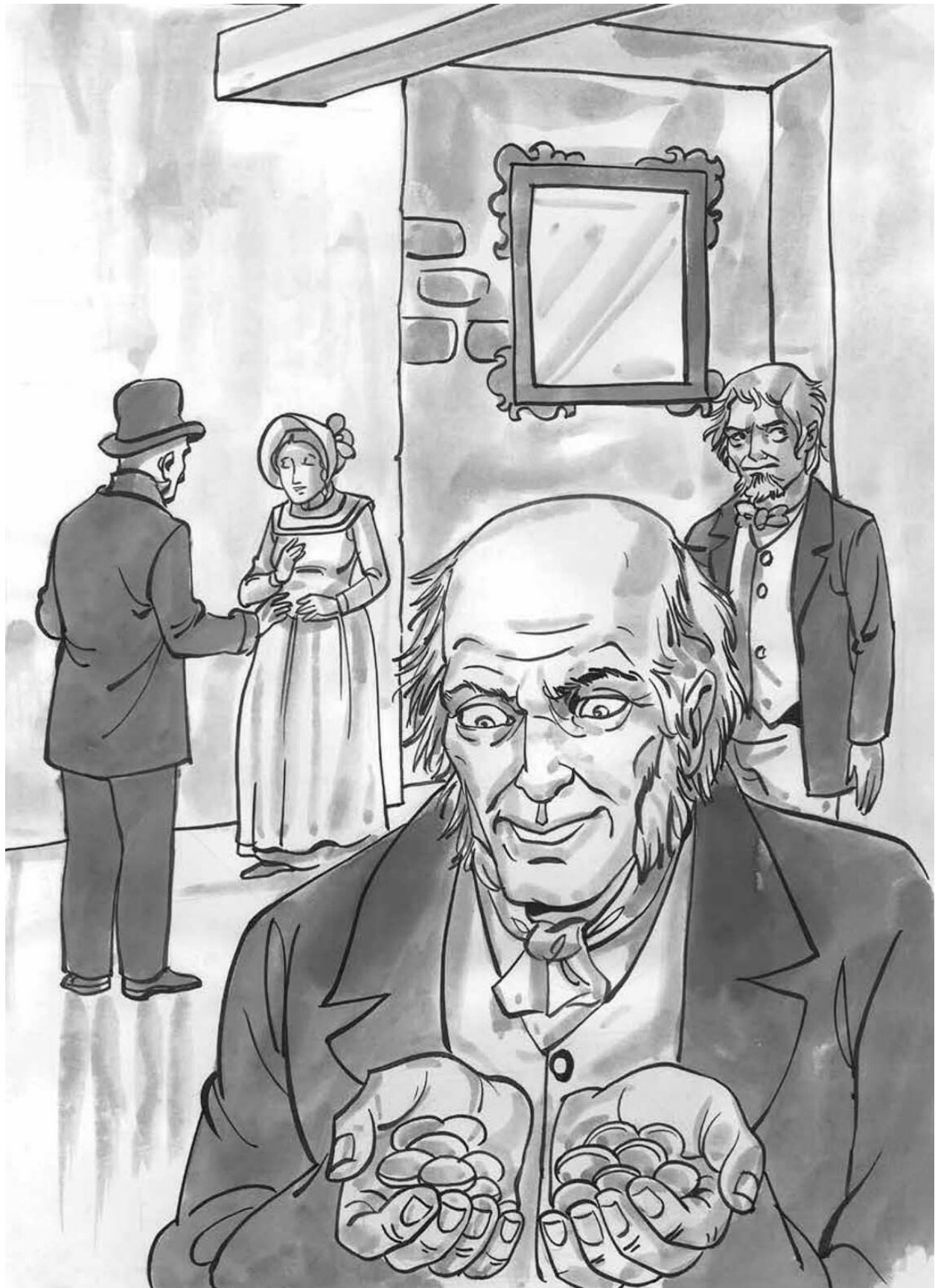
However, I was still very lonely. Sure, the Micawbers were very nice people, but I longed for someone whom I could talk to, with whom I could share my concerns and my misfortunes. I worked tirelessly from morning to night, and as I fell asleep at night, I would worry that all that I had learnt at school would slowly fade from my mind. Every day, as I washed bottles in the workshop, I could feel my tears drop into the soapy water in the basin below.

I saw that over the days, the visits of the creditors kept increasing and it was getting really difficult for Mr. Micawber to keep them at bay. Which is why, when I came back from work in the evenings, I would take some of the furniture that the Micawbers had to the local pawnshop. There, I would sell it for whatever little amount the shopkeeper would give. But Mr. Micawber would always keep his spirits up and repeat, "Everything bad that could happen has already happened. Now something good is bound to happen!"

Alas, it just got worse. Mr. Micawber's creditors finally went to court against him and he was sentenced to the King's Bench Prison, with the understanding that he would be freed only when his debts were paid in full. On special permission, his family too was allowed to go and live with him in jail.

Mrs. Micawber, the kind old woman that she was, was rather concerned about me. I was just ten years old, all alone in the bustling, brutish city of London. She wondered how I would manage to eat, or even clothe myself. Therefore, before she went to join Mr. Micawber in prison, she made arrangements for me to stay in a cheap little lodge by the prison. I was to go to meet them every evening once I got back from work.





Finally, Mr. Micawber's fortunes took a turn for the better and his prophecy came true. One of his relatives had died in Australia and had left him quite a sizeable share of wealth. It was enough for Mr. Micawber to square up all his debts and still have a small fortune left with him. Mr. Micawber decided that it was best that he make a new beginning and therefore, he decided to move to Australia with his family.

Now, I was in a bit of a bother. With the Micawbers making preparations to leave, I did not know what to do. One day, as I continued scrubbing bottles in Mr. Grinby's workshop, it suddenly struck me that my mother and Peggotty had once spoken about an Aunt of mine, an Aunt Betsey. Since she was the only relative that I had left in this world, I decided to go to her. I wrote to Peggotty about my plans and also for Aunt Betsey's address. Peggotty's reply was prompt, along with a half-guinea to take me there.

I hired a cart and decided to leave for Aunt Betsey's house at once. But the cart driver was a rogue and he ran off with my little box of clothes and the half-guinea that Peggotty had sent for me. I tried chasing after him, but it was to no avail. I was left lying in a ditch, all muddy and soggy.

All I had left in my pockets after that horrible incident was my week's pay from Mr. Grinby. I knew of course, that those seven shillings would not be enough for me to make that long journey by cart or carriage, and therefore, I started walking towards my destination. I slept wherever I could, and ate whatever little food I could beg for.



Finally, after several days spent like this on the road, I reached Dover. A kind carriage driver directed me to Aunt Betsey's house. She lived in a neat little cottage overlooking the sea on the cliff. Very slowly, I took my last few steps towards the gate leading to the cottage.

Truth be told, I just did not have the courage to walk up to the door and introduce myself. Of what I had heard from my mother and Peggotty about Aunt Betsey, I wasn't too sure whether she would even want to see me in the first place. I just kept standing there, looking like a beggar.

Suddenly, I saw an old, but well-maintained lady come out from the cottage and walk right to the plants in the garden. She was rather tall for a woman and she had an extremely composed feel about her as she marched on forward to tend to her garden. As she glimpsed at me, she yelled, "Get out from here, boy! This house only welcomes girls!" And so saying, she got busy with her plants without even giving me a second look.

Not knowing what else to do, I slowly walked up to her and very meekly said, "Please Aunt Betsey, I have nowhere else to go. My name is David Copperfield and I am your late nephew's son!"

"Oh goodness me!" were the only words that escaped from her lips as she lost her balance and sat down on the garden path. She just stared at me, perhaps trying to figure out why I looked so pathetic.

I was so tired and weak by then, I don't remember clearly what explanation I mumbled to her. "My mother had told me about you, Aunt Betsey. But when she died, I was thrown out of the house by my step-father and sent to work. I could not take it anymore, I just thought that I would come to you. You are all that I have..." and I started crying, unable to maintain my bearings anymore. All my sufferings since the time my mother died, particularly over the past one week came crushing back to me.

Aunt Betsey did not even utter another word. She quickly picked herself up and grabbing me by my shoulders, she pushed me inside the cottage. I was made to lie down on the sofa, with a pillow under my head and she rushed into the kitchen and came back with some tea for me to drink.

"Mr. Dick! Come out here please, Mr. Dick!" yelled my Aunt. Soon we were joined by a pleasant looking aged gentleman, who seemed to have a rather funny expression on his face. His eyes twinkled as he saw me, and I heard Aunt Betsey tell him, "This is the son of my late nephew. He goes by the name of David Copperfield, and believe it or not, he has runaway from

his workplace. Now I'd like you tell me what I should do next!"

Mr. Dick kept staring at me incredulously for quite some time before he said, "I think the answer to that is indeed simple, Miss Betsey... you need to give him a thorough wash, don't forget to clean behind the ears, and then give him something to eat. My, he looks famished!"



As soon as I was done bathing, I was put into a pair of Mr. Dick's shirts and trousers and I was wrapped in several shawls and blankets. I felt so nice and warm being wrapped up like a bundle, that within the next few moments, I was fast asleep.

I only woke up the next morning. The first thing I did was tell my Aunt about everything that happened to me over the last few months, starting from the time Mr. Murdstone married my mother. Aunt Betsey listened to my entire story, screaming out, "Oh that scoundrel, oh that killer!" Everytime I mentioned some of Mr. Murdstone's cruelties, my Aunt would lapse into rage.

She informed me later that she had already written to Mr. Murdstone about me and was expecting them to visit shortly. I shuddered the moment I heard that and asked her, "Will they take me back with them?"

"We'll just have to wait and find that out for ourselves now, won't we David?" replied Aunt Betsey and brought the topic under discussion to a halt.

Aunt Betsey then gave me a hearty breakfast and once I was done, she ordered me to go up and wish Mr. Dick a good morning. But before I could leave, Aunt Betsey warned me, "Always remember to call him Mr. Dick, and not by his real name, Richard Babely. He just never got around to adjusting to that horrid name. So whatever you do, just make sure that his real name is never used around this house!"

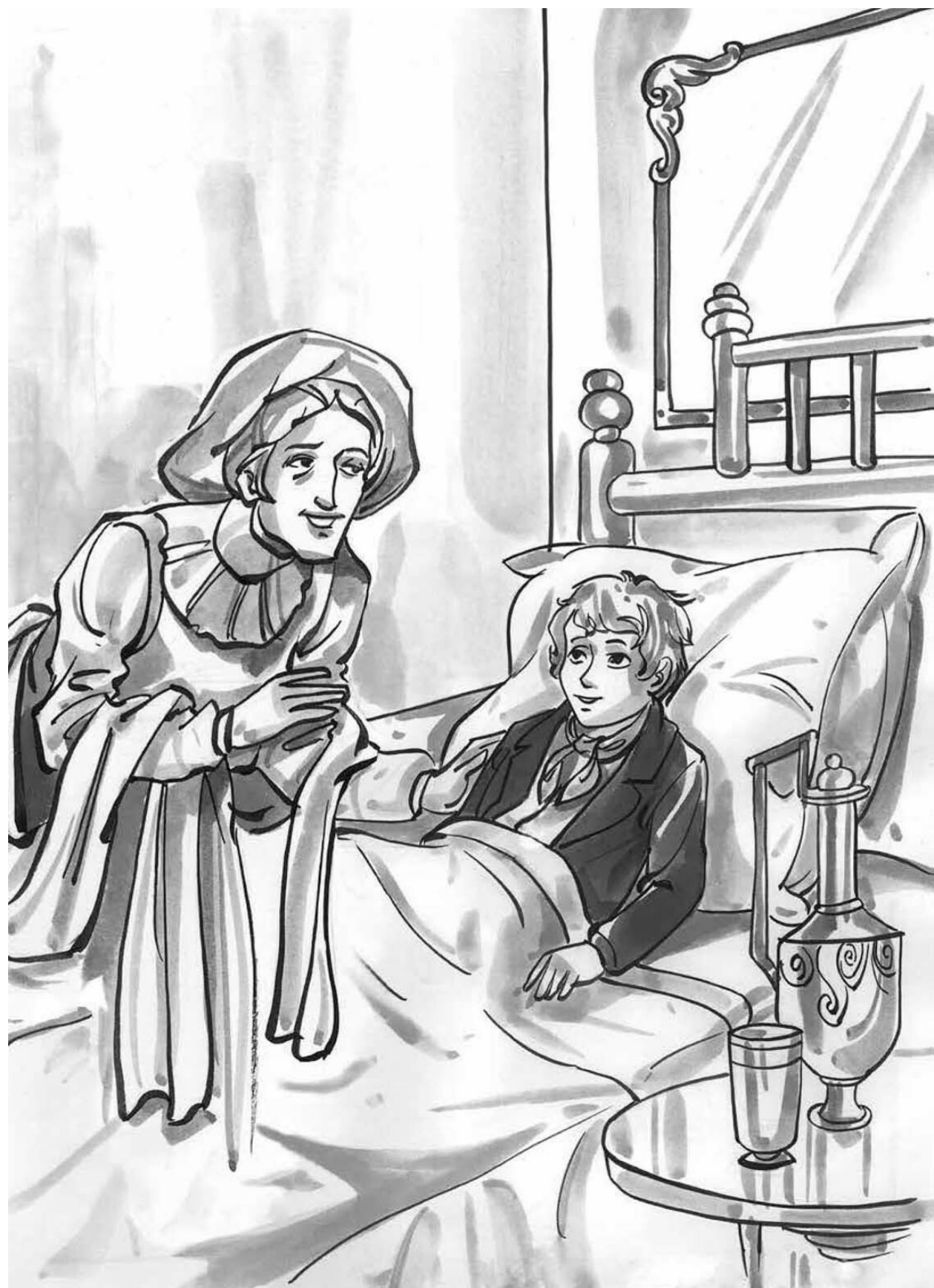
As I reached Mr. Dick's room upstairs, I found the old man busy writing something. Apparently he had been writing the memoirs of some royal personality for the last ten years. It had taken him that long because he couldn't concentrate too long without bringing up the beheading of King Charles every few pages. My Aunt later explained to me that these were all symptoms of his erratic, yet harmless disease.

Mr. Dick put down his pen as he saw me and said in a booming, pleasant voice, "Welcome to another mad morning in this mad world, my boy!" And then he started laughing hysterically. I got rather scared on hearing him laugh like that. He then pointed towards a kite and asked, "And what do you make of that?" I had never ever seen anything quite like it. The kite was taller than the tallest person I had ever seen. Why, I could have sworn it almost brushed against the ceiling of the room.

"Should we go out and try to fly this kite?" Mr. Dick asked. I was truly excited at seeing such a kite and was eager to see how it flew in the sky. But

considering the fact that I could hardly move about Mr. Dick's large clothes, we had to postpone our kite flying to another day.





As soon as I went back downstairs, I rushed to Aunt Betsey and asked her, "Are you certain that Mr. Dick has no mental illness?"

My Aunt shot a cold, hard look back at me and said, "Of course not! Don't go about talking like his family now. They always wanted to have him locked up in a mental asylum. That's why I took him in. He is a distant relative of mine, and ever since he moved in here, he has been my most trusted guide and adviser."

I spent the next few days in great comfort and care with Aunt Betsey and Mr. Dick. It was the best period of my entire life. But whenever the shadows of the past darkened my memory, the thought of seeing Mr. Murdstone and his sister Jane Murdstone, walking up the garden path made me delirious.

And as was expected, one day they finally did arrive at my Aunt's cottage in Dover. I was so scared on seeing them through the window, that I wanted to rush up and hide in Mr. Dick's room. But Aunt Betsey would have nothing of it and I was made to stand in a corner, behind the sofa.

Mr. Murdstone began at once, "This boy has given me nothing but trouble over these last few months. He is thoroughly indisciplined and a nuisance." Miss Jane Murdstone also added, "I do not think there is a more horrid little boy in this whole world than David!"

"Liars!" yelled Aunt Betsey so loudly that even I jumped. "You murderers first killed his mother and then sent off a ten year old boy to work in London? And all this while, you both have been sitting prim and proper and in great comfort in a house that legally belongs to David right now. You have some nerve, telling me lies about him! David was right, you two really are wretches and scoundrels. This boy will be going back with you only if he wants to!"

And then turning to me, Aunt Betsey asked, "Do you really want to go back with these people, David?" I blurted out, "Aunt Betsey, they ruined my happy life completely. They took my mother from me, they took Peggotty from me, they didn't even allow me to go back to school! Oh please, dear, dear Aunt Betsey, don't make me go back with them! Please let me stay here with you..."

Mr. Murdstone started fuming on hearing me speak. He stared angrily at me and said in a cold tone, "David will come back with me this time and I will deal with him in anyway that I wish. But if he stays here, then this will be the last time that I shall ever come here."

My aunt turned to Mr. Dick at once and asked him for his opinion in the matter as well. Mr. Dick heard her out and then continued to stare at me for quite some time. Finally, he stammered, “Clothes! He needs a new suit, and this time, one in his own measurements!”

I was overjoyed. My aunt immediately turned to the Murdstones and said rather haughtily, “I think the boy has made his decision. Now get out of my house before I stamp both of you to the ground and grow roses on your heads!”

As soon as the Mr. Murdstone and his sister walked out of the door, I ran to Aunt Betsey and embraced her while kissing her hands in gratitude. I went over to Mr. Dick too and shook his hands, thanking him all the while for allowing me to stay there.

And thus began a new chapter in my life... or as I like to call it, a new beginning in my life. Finally, I was with people who loved me and cared about me, and who also called me by a new name — Trotwood Copperfield, or Trot, as my Aunt named me. Happiness was finally showering its goodness on me.





Chapter Six

Beginning

Aunt Betsey was very considerate towards me, knowing fully well how dreadful and dreary the last few months of my life had been. Therefore, she let me be on my own for quite some time, and did not interfere in my matters even once.

Then finally one evening, while she and Mr. Dick were busy playing a game of backgammon, she asked me, “I think we should think about a school for you, Trot. We cannot have you uneducated. Would you like to go to a good school in Canterbury?”

I jumped at her proposal at once and agreed, “That would be wonderful, Aunt Betsey! And Canterbury is so close to our house, I could even come back on weekends!”

The next morning, Aunt Betsey and I hopped onto a cart which would take us to Canterbury. On the way, she told me that we were going to meet Mr. Wickfield, her lawyer, as she believed he could refer a good school.

We finally arrived at an old, but beautiful house that was built right at the edge of the mountains. Aunt Betsey and I got off at the house and she knocked loudly on the door. When the door was opened, I almost jumped in fright. The freckled face that looked at us had the most eerie, uncanny look about him. He must have been a boy of fifteen at the most, though his entire appearance made him seem to be much, much older. His body was just a combination of bones, and I could have sworn that he did not have any eyelashes.



“Ah! It’s good to see you again, Uriah Heep! Is Mr. Wickfield at home?” enquired my aunt. We were led into the main hall and were greeted by an aging, yet handsome looking tall man with a large pot belly. This happened to be my Aunt’s lawyer, Mr. Wickfield. One look at his belly and I remembered Peggotty’s words, ‘Only the men who drink too much wine have a stomach like that, Master Davy’ she would always say. I wondered how true her words held for Mr. Wickfield.

“Miss Betsey, what a wonderful surprise it is for you to come by like this... tell me, how can I help you?” he said.

Aunt Betsey held me by the shoulder and pushed me forward, saying, “This is my grand-nephew, David Copperfield, son of my late nephew, you see... he needs to go to a good school and I trust you will be best suited to help me find one for him.”

Mr. Wickfield suggested at once that I get myself admitted to Dr. Strong’s School, which was reserved only for boys. However, there was one problem. Since Dr. Strong’s school did not provide any hostel facilities, Aunt Betsey wondered where I could stay. Mr. Wickfield gladly offered his own house for me to stay at on weekdays, but the weekends I was to go and live with my Aunt and Mr. Dick.

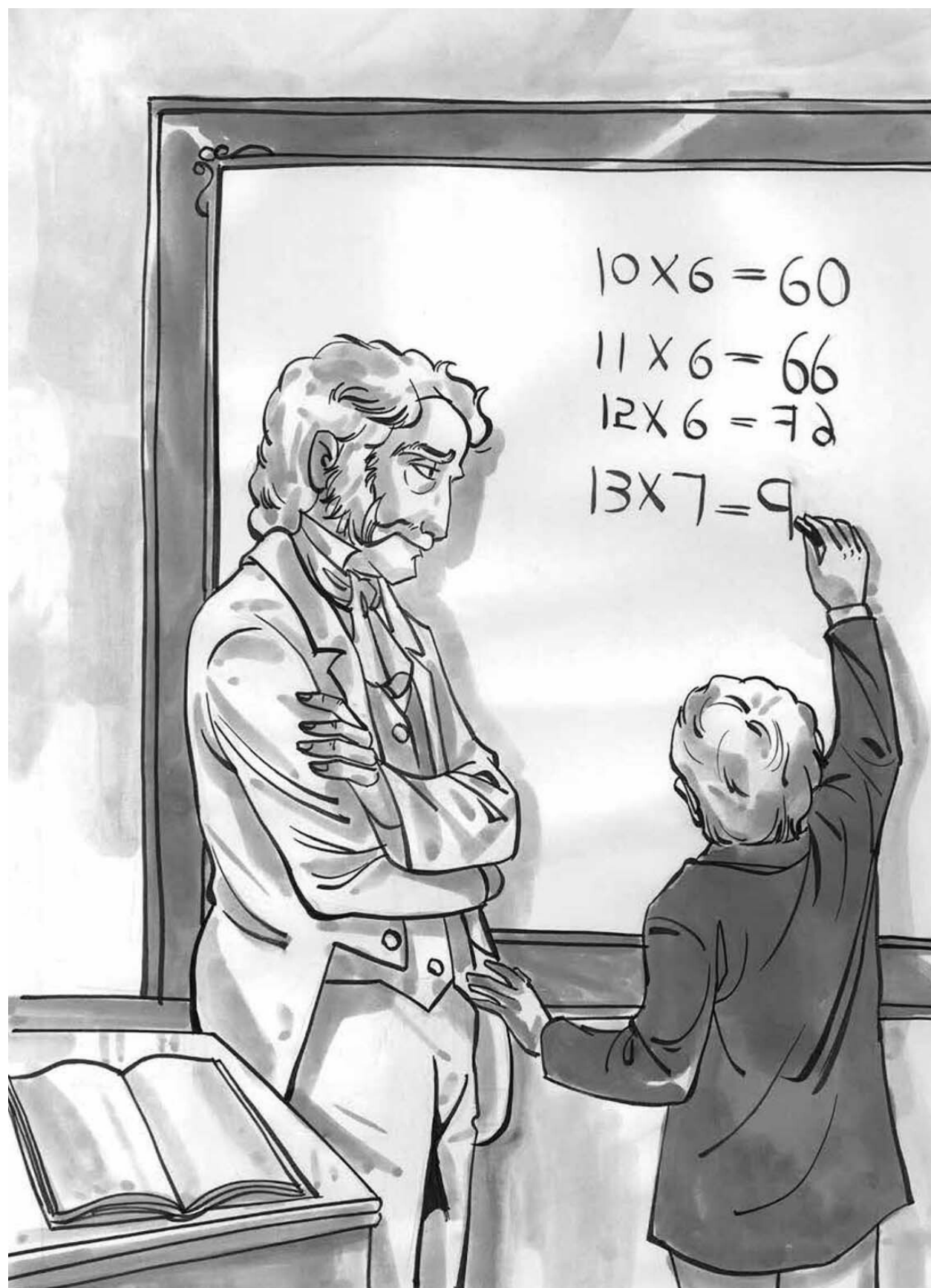
Mr. Wickfield called out to Agnes, his daughter, to come and show me to my room. Agnes was surely the most happy and cheerful person that I had ever met in my entire life. She was so full of life and so pleasant that I felt safe and comfortable around her at once. My room was at the top of the stairs and it was a splendid room to work in. I was all ready to settle down and start afresh at a new school.

That evening, just before I was retiring to my room, I met Uriah Heep closing up before sleeping. I shook hands with him as a gesture of friendship, but as soon as I got my hand back, I started to rub it against my shirt — his hand had felt cold and strangely damp, giving me a more unpleasant feeling about him. I don’t know why, but I could not get myself to be at peace around that freckled face.

The next day, Mr. Wickfield took me to my new school and introduced me to Dr. Strong, our headmaster. The doctor was a man in his sixties, and he was the polar opposite of Mr. Creakle of Salem House. He made me very comfortable at once and was indeed very kind towards me. I was also introduced to a pretty young lady, who I first mistook to be the doctor’s

daughter, but later realised to be his wife when Mr. Wickfield kept referring to her as Mrs. Strong.

Dr. Strong's classes were indeed a joy to attend. He made everything so simple for us to absorb that I was certain than I was learning at a much faster pace than I did earlier. After classes, Dr. Strong was writing a dictionary, which according to a mathematically sharp student in the class, would take him around fifteen hundred years to complete at the rate in which he was going.





Our classes progressed smoothly, with Dr. Strong monitoring the academic development of each one of his students personally. And perhaps because of his amicable nature, the students too respected him in return and paid extra attention to their studies.

I was going through the best phase of my life, cherishing each and every moment. The only trouble that still persisted was the crooked presence of Uriah Heep in my life.



Chapter Seven

Revisiting

Time passed very smoothly through the next few years and I was soon a young lad of seventeen, about to finish my education from Dr. Strong's school. He had appointed me as the head boy and would often refer to me as "my star student".

It was during this time that Aunt Betsey started having several conversations with me about my future plans, particularly those relating to my career. I had naturally given it some thought, but I could not decide on any one career path that I preferred, or was wanting to take up. Therefore, Aunt Betsey suggested that I make a small little trip to Yarmouth and visit Peggotty. She explained that the change of place would allow me some privacy and reflection on my future course of action.

I went to bid farewell to Mr. Wickfield and Agnes the next day. Mr. Wickfield, though still the same man he was when I first met him, had started to grow old too quickly. His hands would shiver, he started to look pale, and he had trouble in speaking clearly. Agnes, now a grown-up beautiful lady was my best friend and confidante, and I could see she was gravely concerned about her father's health.

I packed my bags and boxes with a heavy heart since I would not be seeing Mr. Wickfield and Agnes for some time. But I did not like the enthusiasm with which Uriah Heep helped me pack and load all my belongings in the carriage. Clearly he wanted me out of that house for some obviously nefarious reason.





I then went on to spend a few days at Aunt Betsey's house in Dover and then took the night coach to London. I realised that I was now a grown-up young man, with a proper education and with sufficient cash in my pockets — a stark contrast to that dishevelled boy of ten who had walked all the way from London to Dover.

I remember speeding past Salem House. For a moment there, I had this great desire to go inside and box behind Mr. Creakle's ears, a quiet redemption for those torturous few months that he had offered me in his institution.

The coachman decided to take a break for supper at a small transit inn at Charing Cross. I too decided to eat something and went into the inn. As I was sipping my coffee, my wandering eyes caught the glimpse of a well-groomed, handsome young man leaving the inn. Without wasting another moment I rushed up to him and said, "And now you don't even recognise me, do you James?"

The man spun around on his heels to face me, but he still took some time to identify me, before he blurted, "And if it isn't young David Copperfield!" It was James Steerforth, my best friend in Salem House, who had made those disastrous months somewhat bearable for me.

It was indeed an emotional moment for the two of us — but we couldn't just hug each other and break into tears, however strong the temptation might have been. We sat down at my table and discussed old times. I told him everything that had happened in my life since I left Salem House, and he too brought me up to date with the developments in his. He had been studying at Oxford University and when I met him, he was going back home, to Highgate to meet his mother.

"I am travelling too... to Yarmouth, to visit my childhood nurse, Peggotty," I informed him. "Well in which case, Copperfield, why don't you come with me to Highgate first and then, after we're done visiting my mother, we could both head to Yarmouth and meet this nurse of yours," said Steerforth. Since I was already so happy to see my old childhood friend again, I agreed to his proposal at once.

I met Steerforth's mother, an ageing, yet elegant looking lady with a face that must surely have been very attractive in her youth. And I also met Miss Rosa Dartle, Mrs. Steerforth's long-time friend, a dark haired, slim and very beautiful lady, whose good looks were marred with a scar that ran across her

lip. What was even more astonishing was Steerforth telling me that it was he who had been responsible for that scar. “It was just one of those incidents when you’re young, Copperfield. She must have been scolding me for something that I had done, and I threw a hammer right at her face. But that’s in the past, I just know that she is as fond of me as I am of her!”

We made great merry that night, drinking our wine and raising toasts to our joyous reunion after so many years. “Here’s to another great many years of togetherness, Copperfield... to friendship and to life!” cried Steerforth as he raised his wine glass. I was truly happy to finally be reconnected with my old friend.

I had a wonderful time in Highgate for the next few days that we spent there. Just like in school, Steerforth took me under his wing once again, as he got his servant, Littimer, who had been with him since his days at Oxford, to bring us horses for our riding lessons, swords for fencing and even boxing gloves, since Steerforth felt that it was absolutely essential that I learn how to box.

Finally, we bid farewell to Mrs. Steerforth and Miss Rosa and left for Yarmouth. It was quite late in the evening when we actually reached the sea port and therefore, we decided to spend the night at a hotel.

The next morning, even before I could get up, Steerforth had been out taking a walk along the seashore, chatting with all the fishermen that were working there and basically having a ball of a time. Later in the morning, he stormed into our room at the hotel and burst upon me saying, “I saw it, I swear I knew the house from the way in which you described it to me. Mr. Peggotty is a genius for living in such a spectacular construction... Why, I almost had a thought of going in and introducing myself as the now older David Copperfield. But I guess you need to first go in and have that moment of reunion with your nurse. Go ahead, cry, make merry, spread some joy first, and then I’ll come and join all of you!”



As I walked up to Peggotty's house, I tried to remember the last time that I had seen her in the flesh. I presumed it must have been around the time when she got married and I came to Yarmouth with her after my mother's death. After that we had just been writing letters to each other.

Peggotty answered my knock on the door and looking at me without recognising me, she asked politely, "Yes Sir, how may I help you?"

I tried my level best not to burst into laughter and replied, "I am looking for some information and I believe you might be able to help me here, Ma'am... Its about that house in Blunderstone, you know, the one where there lived a boy called David..." and I couldn't even complete my little joke since Peggotty grabbed me and started kissing me all over, softly screaming, "Master Davy, Master Davy, oh what a gentleman you have become."

It was quite embarrassing for me to hug my old nurse like that for all to see and even worse, break into sobs, but at that moment, I couldn't care even one little bit. I was just over the moon on seeing my old nurse again.

We then went in and met Mr. Barkis. The old carriage driver was not keeping the best of health on account of his rheumatism, but he welcomed me warmly and we sat around him, discussing old times — and particularly how I carried the message of "Barkis is Willing" between him and Peggotty.

Steerforth came in shortly after and his dignified manners and articulate speech, coupled with his extreme good looks won over Peggotty's affections almost at once.

We spent the entire day at Peggotty's house and in the evening, we all set off for the boathouse, Mr. Peggotty's house. I remembered how the door was usually never closed in the boathouse, and so I quietly walked in. Everyone was in, with Mr. Peggotty sitting by the fire, watching over Ham and Emily who were excitedly talking to each other, their eyes locked with each others and Mrs. Gummidge too joined in on their pleasant conversation.

I stood there for a while before Ham jumped up and cried, "Lookie who's here now... it's our Mas'r Davy!"

We were welcomed with the same warmth and affection that I always received on my visits to Yarmouth. Mr. Peggotty invited us all to join him by the fireplace. Ham blushed as he told me that he and Emily were engaged to be married shortly. I congratulated them with all my heart and wished them all the very best in their lives. Steerforth then took over the entire evening, revelling people with his stories and keeping them entertained throughout. I

noticed Emily being particularly enamoured by Steerforth's charms and in a while, she too joined in on the conversations.

As we were walking back to our rooms at the hotel that night, Steerforth confessed that he had had a wonderful time with the entire family. But he also did comment about how he felt that Ham was too much of a dunderhead for Emily and that worried me just a little. However, knowing Steerforth, I guessed that he was most probably joking.

We stayed on for a long time at Yarmouth, particularly since Steerforth was having a fantastic time going out boating with Mr. Peggotty and interacting with the fishermen there. I meanwhile, made several trips to my old house. It was a changed place completely. The Murdstones had long since moved out of there; the grass around the garden had grown wild, almost covering the tombs of my parents and my half-brother. Even the windows were all shuttered and I couldn't even take a peak inside.



One evening, while returning from one of my last visits to Blunderstone, I was a little surprised to see Steerforth in the boathouse, sitting with Mr. Peggotty. Something must most surely have happened, since Steerforth looked crippled with doubt and sadness. The minute he saw me in the room, he came up to me and said, "I have bought a boat!"

I could not understand why such good news had to meet with such an austere mood, as Steerforth went on, "Mr. Peggotty here has agreed to master the boat for me. I have even spoken to Littimer and he will be back here to organise the new sails and all other such details. I am having the boat called *The Little Emily*."

A sense of fear flashed across my face. I was happy with Steerforth's purchase, but for the life of me I could not figure out why he needed to call the boat *The Little Emily*. Did Steerforth really have any designs on Emily? Is that why he thought so lowly of Ham? Was it a mistake to bring Steerforth with me to Yarmouth, to break a family that cared so much for me?

Later that night, when I was visiting Peggotty, I met a friend of Emily's, called Martha. Peggotty told me that Emily and Martha had been friends right from childhood, though Mr. Peggotty did not think too highly of the girl.

Martha apparently was in some kind of trouble and she had come to Emily for advice and for help. Emily listened to her tales of woe and quickly gave her what little money she had with her. Martha left for London that night itself, apparently ready to make a new beginning in London.





Chapter Eight

Starting with Work

Finally, it was time for Steerforth and me to bid farewell to our friends at Yarmouth and head back to our homes and resume our lives once again. The entire family was there to see us off, including several of Steerforth's new fishermen friends. I felt sad to leave Peggotty again, but I was certain that I would meet her soon enough.

We drove in silence for quite some time before Steerforth turned to me asked, "The objective of your travels was for you to find some time to decide on what you want to do with your life, am I right? So, did you think of anything, young Copperfield?"

I pondered over the issue a little bit more and then replied, "I think I want to be a proctor... you know, become a business agent."

Steerforth seemed to be quite impressed with my choice of profession and he at once told me everything that he knew about the proctor trade. I was indeed glad that he could provide me with such a lot of information.

Steerforth and I then parted ways. He had to return to Highgate, to his mother and I went down to London, where Aunt Betsey was travelling and went to her hotel to meet her.

As soon as I finished telling her about all that had happened at Yarmouth, I told Aunt Betsey about my desire to become a proctor but I also added, "The only thing that concerns me Aunt Betsey, is that training to become a proctor could cost quite a large sum of money... and you have already done such a lot for me..."

Before I could complete what I had started to say, Aunt Betsey cut me

short and said, “I have made many mistakes in my life, Trot, and one of them was neglecting your father and mother. I should have reached out to him, I should have been with her when she needed me the most. But it is too late for me to start regretting those actions. And you have helped me change myself ever since you walked in through that garden path, all covered in mud.”



I was fighting very hard to fight back those tears that were just fighting to fall out of my eyes. I hugged Aunt Betsey and thanked her for everything she had done for me.

The very next day, Aunt Betsey took me to the offices of Spenlow and Jorkins, who were my Aunt's proctors and she got me into a training programme with them. My training would last for a month. Aunt Betsey then decided to get me a small little apartment, from where I could commune easily to my offices. We took a flat on the top floor of a house just by the river.

I loved my life and the way it was progressing. It felt extremely exhilarating to stay in a house of my own, with the key to that house jingling in my coat pocket. But every evening, once I got back from work, the eerie silence of the house broke me down completely. I longed for someone whom I could talk to, someone whom I could consult with and take advice from — someone like Mr. Wickfield's daughter, Agnes.

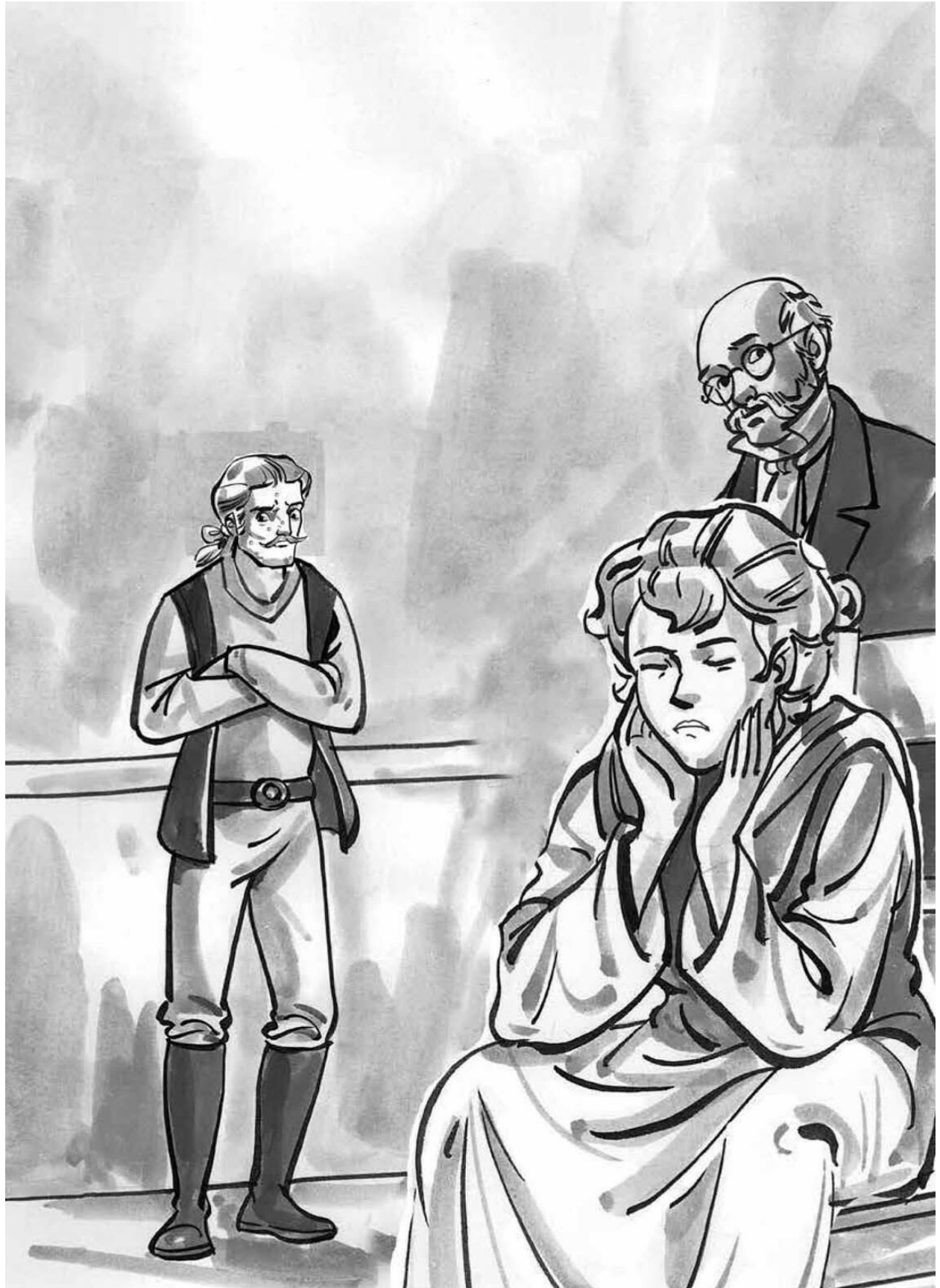
Surprisingly, the very next day, I got a message from my dear Agnes! She was in London visiting her friends and had come to the big city with her father and Uriah Heep. She wanted to know if it were possible for me to go and visit her. I rushed off to the hotel she was staying in at once.

Agnes welcomed me warmly and cheerfully like she always did, and yet I could make out at once that something was definitely troubling her. She went on to tell me how Uriah Heep had persuaded Mr. Wickfield to take him on board as his partner. At first, Agnes confessed, that she was pretty happy with this new arrangement, as she felt that her father would find more time to rest. But it seemed that with time, Uriah Heep was instead taking over from her father, leaving Mr. Wickfield completely broken and ruined.

I tried my best to comfort Agnes as she started sobbing thinking about the condition of her poor father, but just as Mr. Wickfield and Heep joined us, she managed to compose herself at once. Later that evening, after we had finished dinner and Agnes went on to help Mr. Wickfield get to bed, Uriah Heep turned to me and very excitedly said that he wanted to marry Agnes since he was head over heels in love with her!

I was furious. I knew that the scoundrel had an ulterior motive in wanting to marry Agnes and I was confident that he was just doing this because he wanted to secure Mr. Wickfield's large fortune. I was so enraged at his words that I had a hard time in controlling myself from branding him with the red

hot poker from the fireplace. Luckily for him, Agnes came in to join us soon enough and I bid her farewell and left for my house.





Meanwhile, I was invited by Mr. Spenlow, my new employer, to his country house, where he was throwing me a small party to celebrate my employment with his firm. It was at this party that I first met Dora, Mr. Spenlow's daughter. I cannot perhaps even describe how beautiful she was and I was confident that I have never ever set eyes on so refined and pretty a lady. My heart was thumping inside my chest and I knew that I had fallen in love. I spent a lot of time talking to the woman of my dreams, and in the process, I spent one of the best weekends of my entire life with her.

Business was in full swing in London and right from the moment I got back from Mr. Spenlow's countryside house, I was invited to one of those business parties that are so common with proctors. I was having a wonderful time at this party, when one of the guests there spoke of a man that he had brought along with him, a gentleman by the name of Traddles.

My mind rushed back to Salem House on hearing that name. Traddles. Tommy Traddles. Could it be my old friend from my first school? The one who actually helped me blend in with the rest of the boys and also helped me cover my shame because of that board that I had to wear? I rushed through the crowd, till I found a man whose hair was all over his face and his mouth wide open. There was no mistaking it, it definitely was Tommy Traddles.

I rushed up to him and we hugged each other. We were both extremely delighted on catching up like this, so many years from the time we first met each other. Tommy immediately scribbled down his address and I agreed to call on him the very next day.



The address which Tommy had given me led me to a rather seedy part of town. The road leading to his house was shabby and broken, and it looked like Tommy stayed in a very run down part of London. It was almost as if I had been taken many years back into the past, when I worked at Mr. Grinby's workshop and lived with the Micawbers.

However, Tommy welcomed me cheerfully into his small, but very neat little apartment. We reminisced about old times and had our share of laughter at the expense of Mr. Creakle. Tommy then went on to tell me about everything that had happened in his life since we last parted. His parents had died in an accident, and he had to move in with one of his uncles. Sadly, the uncle too died recently, leaving Tommy with absolutely nothing. But Tommy kept his hopes and aspirations alive, striving to make it big as a lawyer. He was still going for his law classes and took whatever jobs he could to support himself.

When he told me about his fiancée, Sophy, I could not but feel a sense of remorse that I did not have with Dora, what Tommy so proudly had with the girl of his dreams.

"I won't lie to you, Copperfield, life has surely been hard. But it's alright, you know," Tommy went on. "I earn little, but I can suffice on that. Plus, I have a good time with Mr. and Mrs. Micawber who live downstairs. We all live poorly, but we manage to help ourselves and carry on with our lives."

The very mention of that name made me exclaim, "Micawber? Mr. and Mrs. Micawber? Why, I know them very well indeed. I must go down and meet them right away!"

My knock on the door was answered by Mr. Micawber, but naturally he could not recognise me right away. However, as I spoke to him a little longer, it all came back to him and he welcomed me with open arms. Mrs. Micawber too was overjoyed to see me once more and she insisted that I stay with them for dinner.

I could make out, though, that they were having trouble just feeding for themselves, and therefore, providing food for me was going to cost them very much. Therefore, I immediately made plans to have dinner with the Micawbers and Tommy at my house that weekend. It was a really nice feeling to catch up with old friends after such a long time!

My guests all arrived promptly on the weekend, and we all had a gala time talking of old times and how our lives had all moved on since then.

When they finally left later that night, I sat by the fireplace and was lost in thought about all that we had discussed. Suddenly, I heard someone arrive right outside my door and push it wide open. Before me was James Steerforth!

“I’ve just come back from Yarmouth,” Steerforth told me. He had apparently been out there, sailing on his new boat, the *Little Emily*. I asked him about my friends and Steerforth answered all my questions. “Ham and Emily can’t get married right now because Mr. Barkis isn’t keeping too well. I don’t think he’ll be around much longer now.”





I got up at once, concerned at my old friend's health and said, "I should go visit Peggotty at once. She will surely need some help to manage the affairs if something happens to Mr. Barkis!"

Steerforth agreed to my proposal, but said, "Why not come down with me to Highgate for a while? That's where I was going right now, and it'll be fun. With the way in which things are now going, who knows when the two of us might meet again!"

I felt a shiver go up my spine as soon as I heard these words. It wasn't like Steerforth to talk this way, and I felt that there was perhaps something that he was not telling me. But I could not bother myself about all that then — Peggotty was all that mattered at that moment.

We reached Highgate in a few days time, from where I was to leave for Yarmouth soon. Things with Steerforth got a little more troubled, when during my visit to Highgate, Miss Dartle asked me, "Has James been spending all the time he's away from home with you?"

I was a little taken aback with this question and replied, "I don't know what you are talking about, Miss. I saw Steerforth quite some time back, when I was last here and we went to Yarmouth. And we've only met each other yesterday."

Steerforth looked rather uncomfortable during my entire visit there, but he still did not tell me anything about what was troubling him. Finally, before going to sleep that night, I informed him that I would be leaving for Yarmouth early in the morning, most probably before he even got up. Steerforth immediately held me by my shoulders and said, "Remember just this much, young Copperfield, that if anything untoward were to happen to our relationship, you must remember me like you did from school."

I was once again shocked at Steerforth's words. This was no way in which one friend spoke to another. I just told him, "You are and will always remain my close friend, Steerforth. Nothing can ever take that away from our relationship."

I kept wondering why Steerforth was acting so strange ever since I last saw him. But then I fell asleep and my mind was completely occupied with Peggotty and Mr. Barkis' illness.



Chapter Nine

Loss

It was a sombre affair at the Peggotty household when I reached Yarmouth. Mr. Peggotty answered my knock on the door and with whatever little cheer he could manage, welcomed me and took me inside. I saw Emily sitting by the fireplace, with a pensive Ham sitting behind her. I did not pay much attention, but it seemed to me that Emily was trying throw off Ham's hand from touching her shoulder. Ham immediately got up and came to me, and as we exchanged pleasantries, he told me that Emily and he were going to get married soon in a quiet ceremony.

I waited for Peggotty to come down and sat down with the rest of the people gathered there, sitting in absolute silence. After quite some time, Peggotty finally came down. She looked tired and completely worn out. I realised right then that Peggotty too was getting old and Barkis' illness must have had quite a strain on her.

She embraced me as soon as she came down and then led me up to the rooms upstairs, where Barkis lay down, almost lifeless. "He just has time till the tide goes down. That's how it happens in these parts, Master Davy," Peggotty informed me. We all sat there quietly by the dying man's bedside.

He opened his eyes after a long, long time and as he saw me, he stretched out his hands towards me and the last words escaped from his lips. "Barkis is willing," he told me and then he was no more.

The ceremony was arranged for the next day. After everything was done and over with, I went back to the hotel, making plans to meet up with my friends at Mr. Peggotty's boathouse. It was a cloudy night when I walked

back to Mr. Peggotty's house. Everyone was already present there and I too joined them by the fireside in silence.





Ham came in after a while, his face looking sad and glum. Mr. Peggotty saw him and asked immediately, "Isn't Emily with you?" Ham gestured that Emily was outside and turning to me, he said, "Mas'r Davy, why don't you come out here and see what I got to show you? Emily and I made it ourselves!"

I considered the request rather odd, considering the fact that we were all in mourning, but I got up and left with Ham nevertheless. Once we were outside, the first thing that I noticed was that Emily was nowhere around the boathouse. One look at Ham, and I feared the worst. I had already deduced that something was wrong when I had seen them last night, but now it seemed my worst fears were confirmed.

"She's gone, Mas'r Davy, she's just gone!" Ham's voice quivered as he broke the news to me. But that wasn't his only concern, as he added, "And what do I tell Mr. Peggotty, Mas'r Davy? That his neice has run away?"

Little did we realise that Mr. Peggotty was standing right behind us at that time. We were both so lost in our misery, that we didn't realise when the door opened and Mr. Peggotty joined us. His face betrayed his attempt to maintain his calm, as it was completely red with shock and pain.

I decided that it was best we all went inside and did not draw the attention of strangers in our misfortune. Ham later explained that Emily had left him a small note, where she admitted to running away to meet the man of her dreams. And she had also mentioned that if he did not accept her, she would stay away forever and make a new life for herself.

Mr. Peggotty heard everything that Ham had to say, and he asked in a cold and sharp voice, "And who was she talking of?"

I knew the answer already. Everything had started to add up, it all made sense finally. The naming of the boat, his final parting words with me only a few days back. Yes, it was him. I knew it was him. Ham turned to me and resting his hands on my shoulder, he said, "Don't take this on yourself, Mas'r Davy... there is nothing that you could have done!" I didn't know what to do anymore. I just fell into the chair behind me and started crying.

Mr. Peggotty too had figured out who the man was whom Emily had fallen in love with. In just a fraction of a moment, the calm and composed cheerful man that I knew turned into a raving and ranting monster. He started screaming at the top of his voice, "That scoundrel, that thug! Why, had I known that it would ever come to this, I would have killed him with my bare

hands. I would have drowned that despicable man in the seas and killed him myself!”



I could feel Peggotty's arm slip behind my neck, as she tried to console me. Ham too bent over me and softly whispered, "None of this has anything to do with you, Mas'r Davy. Please don't cry! It's your friend who is the villain, it's Steerforth who is the scoundrel, not you!"

Mr. Peggotty finally declared, "I am leaving right now and I shall only come back when I am able to find her again. I will come back with my neice, I will come back with Emily! And if I get my hands around him, then I shall see to it that he does not breathe again!"



Chapter Ten

A Heep of Trouble

Peggotty needed me more than ever after the death of Mr. Barkis. More importantly, I had to settle for her the affairs of her late husband's will. Therefore, I asked her to come with me to London so that I could get the necessary legal help for her. It was only a matter of time and soon Peggotty's work in London was done. I asked her to stay with me for a while, as a change of place would help her get over Barkis' death.

Meanwhile, I was invited by Mr. Spenlow to Dora's birthday celebrations. It was a long time since I had last seen Dora, and it filled my heart with joy to be able to see her again. I brought her some flowers and I saw how she kept those flowers close to her side all the time. She even tried to make her little dog, Jip, smell the flowers, but Jip only got more agitated and kept dancing around them.

Within the next few days, Dora and I were secretly engaged. We decided to keep this news from others, as we did not know how our families would react to our love affair. Mr. Spenlow was, after all, my employer and he would perhaps not take too kindly to the fact that his daughter wanted to get married to a young man who still did not have any income of his own. However, I decided to tell Peggotty about my engagement and even wrote a letter to Agnes, telling her about Dora and me.

One night, as Peggotty and I just reached my apartment, I saw that my door was slightly ajar and I could hear some people talking inside my house. I rushed in and as soon as I opened the door wide, I saw Aunt Betsey sitting there, surrounded by some of her suitcases and Mr. Dick too, was standing

next to her, his giant kite hanging on his back. I was both delighted, and indeed a little surprised to see them standing there before me, albeit a little scared because I knew it was not like my Aunt to come to London, unannounced.



My first fear was that she had come to know of my engagement to Dora from someone else other than me, and perhaps she had been offended because I had not included her in such an important decision of my life. I could think of a hundred different ways as to how I may have caused her pain, but I could be sure about none. I realised that the best thing for me was to remain quiet and wait for my Aunt to speak herself.

After exchanging pleasantries with me and Peggotty, Aunt Betsey finally said, "Trot! These are all the belongings that I have left in this world. We have had to vacate that flat in Dover because it is now being put up on rent."

I was mortified on hearing my Aunt speak. She had been financially rather stable and yet here she was, in my flat with only a few suitcases to call her own. Poor Mr. Dick too was left without a roof over his head.

I tried to ask her how this all happened, but all she said was, "Be strong now, Trot! We mustn't let the world take advantage of us like this. First things first, you need to find some place where Mr. Dick can stay for the night. As for me, I'll make some arrangement in your flat. Tomorrow I shall make arrangements for the two of us."

It was getting late, and I knew better than to argue with Aunt Betsey. I therefore went ahead with Mr. Dick to the boarding houses nearby, where he could stay at a relatively cheap cost. Mr. Dick came along with me at once, his giant kite still hanging on his back.



When I came back, I found out that my Aunt had already been talking to Peggotty and in the process, she had come to know about my engagement to Dora.

“You believe that you are in love, or at least that is what I learnt from Peggotty,” she declared as soon as I had made myself comfortable in my house again.

I blushed and replied, “You have heard correctly, Aunt Betsey. I know that we are just two young people and we may not know how to make the right decisions... but when we are together, we feel very happy.”

Aunt Betsey did not say anything in reply for quite some time, but simply nodded her head. She just added, “I hope this works like you plan it to. Someday this was bound to happen, so its all for good that it happened now.”

I was happy since Aunt Betsey had not been upset about my decision to get engaged to Dora. There was quite a lot of affection in the way she had spoken to me.

I could not sleep at all that night. I kept tossing and turning, worried about the path that my future would take. I knew that my proctor training would have to be discontinued, since clearly my Aunt would not be able to pay for it any longer, and I myself had no money. And that got me thinking about how I would ever be able to tell Mr. Spenlow about my desire to marry his daughter.

The next day went just as I had expected it to. I spoke to Mr. Spenlow and Mr. Jorkins about these new developments, and how I would have to discontinue my proctor training with them. I noticed how neither man made any offer of my continuing for a while longer till I could figure out my financial situation, and also how neither man made any gesture of returning the thousand pounds that my Aunt had given them in advance for my training. I felt quite betrayed and shocked at the way in which they dealt with the entire situation.

As I was walking back dejectedly to my house, I kept thinking about Agnes. She had been the only one person in my life whom I could share my troubles with and it was only her advice that had always kept me going in the face of all adversity. I wished she would have been with me right then, so that I could ask her for advice on my current problems.

And then, just out of nowhere, a small cab drove past me and the cheerful face of Agnes looked out of the window and called out my name! I was

amazed at her sudden appearance and I ran up to greet her. She had come to London with her father and Uriah Heep and she was on her way to meet Aunt Betsey since she knew about her coming to London.

As I accompanied her to my house, Agnes and Aunt Betsey at once got down to talking with each other. It was only then that I learnt what had happened to Aunt Betsey, as my poor Aunt told Agnes all about it. Apparently she had invested all her money with a bank on the recommendation of Uriah Heep. Thinking it to be a communication of Mr. Wickfield's instructions, my Aunt did not even think twice and passed on all her money to Heep. But then the bank closed down in a few days time and all my Aunt's money went along with that of the other investors.



Agnes was quite shocked on hearing this news and she too added, “Heep is becoming quite a big bother for my father and for me. He had forced my father to include him as a partner and has now even moved into the house with us. I don’t like all this one bit, Trot... I just want my father safe.”

“I just wish there was something that I could do!” I said. “Both of you have done such a lot for me, and yet I have never been able to stand by you in your times of need.”

But Aunt Betsey immediately retorted, “Listen here now, son. All you need to focus on right now is completing your training and then perhaps try and study law so that you can become a good lawyer. You won’t be helping us by joining the army now, will you?”

Agnes too agreed with Aunt Betsey’s comments and she suddenly said, “What about Dr. Strong? I believe he too is now living in London and he has been looking for a secretary. You know how it is with him... he is still writing that dictionary of his. Why don’t you ask him for the job, Trot!”

I smiled. Once again, Agnes had come to my rescue. “What would I ever do without you, my dear, dear friend? You are like my beautiful guardian angel.”

“And here I thought Dora was your sweet angel!” Agnes mentioned, her eyes twinkling in excitement. I hugged Agnes for always being so understanding and receptive to my problems. I immediately sent off a letter to Dr. Strong and asked for an appointment the very next day.





The old doctor had just grown older by a few years and he was as delighted as I was on seeing me. "Copperfield, you're not quite young anymore, but you do look very good. What fair wind brings you here?" he asked me as we walked around in his garden.

I immediately told him of the predicament I was in and asked him if he would hire me as his secretary. Dr. Strong shrugged his shoulders and replied, "But you are way too qualified for the job of a mere secretary. Why, it doesn't even pay quite as much... why would you want to work here?"

I honestly confided that I still had a few days of my proctor training left and I desperately needed to earn some money. Moreover, I could have flexible timings with Dr. Strong, and that would allow me to complete my training and also make some money to make ends meet.

Dr. Strong was extremely pleased with my honesty and replied, "Fair enough! I shall hire you as my secretary, but there is one condition... the moment you get a better and higher paying job than this one, you will not even think twice before you take it up. Is that agreed upon?"

I laughed at Dr. Strong's kind words and we settled that I would assume my role as his secretary for two hours every morning and three hours at night. Dr. Strong had already decided that it was imperative that I rest on Saturdays and Sundays, so those were my two off days.

And thus began my hectic work schedule. I would get up at dawn every morning and rush to Dr. Strong's house. After working there for two hours, I would head for the offices of Spenlow and Jorkins and then I would return to Dr. Strong's to complete my work for the day. It would be almost nine or ten at night when I'd get back home.

I was a little worried about Mr. Dick, because following my Aunt's financial ruin, he had started to feel he was a burden on her. He wanted to find some work, so that he too could contribute to the family's purse. I spoke to Tommy Traddles at once, thinking that he might have some connections with business houses who could perhaps employ Mr. Dick.

Tommy was most helpful in this matter and he decided to make use of Mr. Dick for his own legal business, since Mr. Dick could make excellent neat legal copies which Tommy always required. When he heard of my financial woes, Tommy also suggested that I take lessons in shorthand, so that I too could make some extra money by covering Parliamentary debates for the various dailies and newspapers.

However, it was the last bit of news that Tommy had to offer which was quite alarming. Mr. Micawber had been having monetary troubles for quite some time and therefore, Tommy had been helping him out from time to time in order to pay the bills. But only recently, Tommy had received a letter from Mr. Micawber, where the old man had said that he had finally found a job, that of a confidential law clerk. While Tommy was most happy for Mr. Micawber on reading that information, it was the next bit of information that troubled him greatly. Mr. Micawber was now working for Uriah Heep!





Chapter Eleven

Villain!

Peggotty had finally managed to round up all her affairs in London and she thought that it would be best if she would go back to Yarmouth to take care of Ham. Mr. Peggotty had still not written back as to the extent of his search for Emily and Peggotty felt that under the circumstances, this would be the best thing to do. I went to see her off at the coach station and she was soon on her way, with a word that if I were ever in need of money, I should write to her at once.

My concern was Dora at that point of time. I was now nothing better than a beggar and I needed to know where she stood in this matter — whether she would still be interested in marrying someone like me who had no money at all to spend on her.

Dora was still very much a child at heart, and however much I tried to explain to her about my situation, she would just not understand. “I am the same person, but times are now different, my love. Will you still be able to love me in just the same way you did before?”

Dora kept playing with her curls as she said, “Why of course, silly man... but will you stop all this serious talk now?”

I knew that my words were having no effect on her understanding and I tried to reason with her further. “I will do as you wish, my dear, but it would really mean a lot to me if you could start reading some books on cooking and also on how to maintain the household expenses.”

This just caused Dora’s anxiety levels to rise and she began to fret on hearing me speak such words. I realised that Dora would perhaps never be

able to understand such mature issues that were essential parts of life.





This was evident, since when I was taking my leave she turned to me and said, "Take care of yourself David, and for heaven's sake, stop getting up every morning at such ungodly hours! You need to rest."

I smiled on hearing such affectionate words from her and replied, "But then I will be late for work, Dora!" Prompt came the reply, "In which case, stop working!" I knew anything that I said would be completely hopeless and it would just have no effect on her.

I had taken Tommy Traddles' advice and had started taking shorthand lessons, so that I could try my hand at another occupation. I could just not understand how young ladies were so efficient at shorthand, for it took me almost forever to understand even the very basics of it.

And then came the most horrible news imaginable, one day — Mr. Splenlow met with an accident while travelling in carriage and was no more. With her father now dead, Dora had to move in with her aunts. I was heartbroken, since I did not know whether her aunts would allow me to call upon her anymore or not.

I was completely crushed with this setback in my love life. Therefore, Aunt Betsey decided that it would be best for me to take a little break from the drudgery at London and go check on her tenants at Dover. I liked that idea very much and set off at once.

Since everything seemed to be in place at Dover, I decided to travel to Canterbury and call on Mr. Wickfield and Agnes. I met with Uriah Heep there as well, and just one look at that sinister and evil man made me wonder why I had even bothered to come to Canterbury. I tried to meet Agnes and discuss my troubles with her, but Uriah Heep's presence around me kept me from the most important reason for coming there in the first place.

After dinner that night, I joined Heep and Mr. Wickfield for some wine before going to bed. I noticed that Uriah Heep went about replenishing Mr. Wickfield's glass over and over again. I found this very odd indeed, but felt that as a guest there, it was best that I held my silence.

After some time, when Mr. Wickfield was quite drunk already, Heep rose from his chair and said, "Mr. Wickfield, I have had this long desire and I think now is perhaps the best time for me to say this to you. I have always been madly in love with Agnes and with your permission Sir, I would like to ask for her hand in marriage."

Even as these words left Heep's lips, I saw Mr. Wickfield jump up from

his chair and just scream like he was in terrible physical pain. He went into a mad fit and started beating on his chest and cried, "This man has ruined me completely. My good name is gone forever because of him, and now he wants to set eyes on my dear daughter? Never! In a million years will I never let this happen."



I rushed towards Mr. Wickfield and tried to calm him down before something happened to him. And all this while I could hear Uriah Heep mutter, "The wine will calm him down, and tomorrow, Agnes will be mine!" Unable to bear it any longer, and burning in rage, I walked over to Heep and gave him such a hard slap that he went flying across the table. My hands were burning because of the force with which I had slapped that villain and I could see blood pour out of his cut lip.

Agnes had heard her father raving and ranting and she had rushed into the room. She took him away, after calming him down somewhat.

When she came back later, I just looked at her face and knew that she had been crying all along. I took her hand in mine and said, "My dear Agnes, you mean the whole world to me and I want you to remember that I will always be here with you. Do not marry Uriah Heep and I will take care of the rest." Agnes only smiled at me in return and said, "God will take care of me, Trot... I trust him!"

I came back to London the next day and as soon as I reached home, I saw a huge pile of letters waiting for me. One of them caused me a great deal of distress. It was from Mrs. Micawber. The poor old lady was in great agony because she felt that her husband, who had once been so loving and caring towards her and their children, had suddenly started to grow distant from his family. And it had all happened ever since he had started working for a man he called Uriah Heep!





Chapter Twelve

Marriage

The days and months since my return to London carried on with usual vigour. I busied myself with work and kept visiting Dora, particularly since her aunts had allowed me to come to their house on weekends. I did not much appreciate the way in which they were treating her like a child, for I felt that it would only make her more unprepared for married life. But the moment my eyes fell on her, I was lost in her childish ways and forgot everything that was wrong in my life.

I was ecstatic one day when Dora asked me whether I could get her some recipe books and accounting books. But nothing much came of it, since understanding the recipes was close to impossible for her, and the accounting books gave her a headache since the numbers would never tally.

However, in a few years time I turned twenty-one and was now legally eligible for marriage. We did not waste any more time and Dora and I were committed to each other in holy matrimony. We may have been the most immature couple ever to walk down to the altar, but we were an immature couple who were very much in love with each other.

It was the post-wedding situation that started to get more and more complex. Since we ourselves were not adept at dealing with household issues, we hired a maid to look after the affairs at home. That was an even bigger disaster. Nothing was ever maintained, food was either served burnt, or not served at all. And to top it all, I could have sworn that our silverware was soon disappearing in great numbers. I tried telling Dora to discipline the help, but she felt too sorry for the lady and that was the end of that issue.

Unable to find any other alternative to the issues at hand, I started looking after the household. Dora however, continued playing with Jip all the time and would often reprimand me for working too hard around the house!

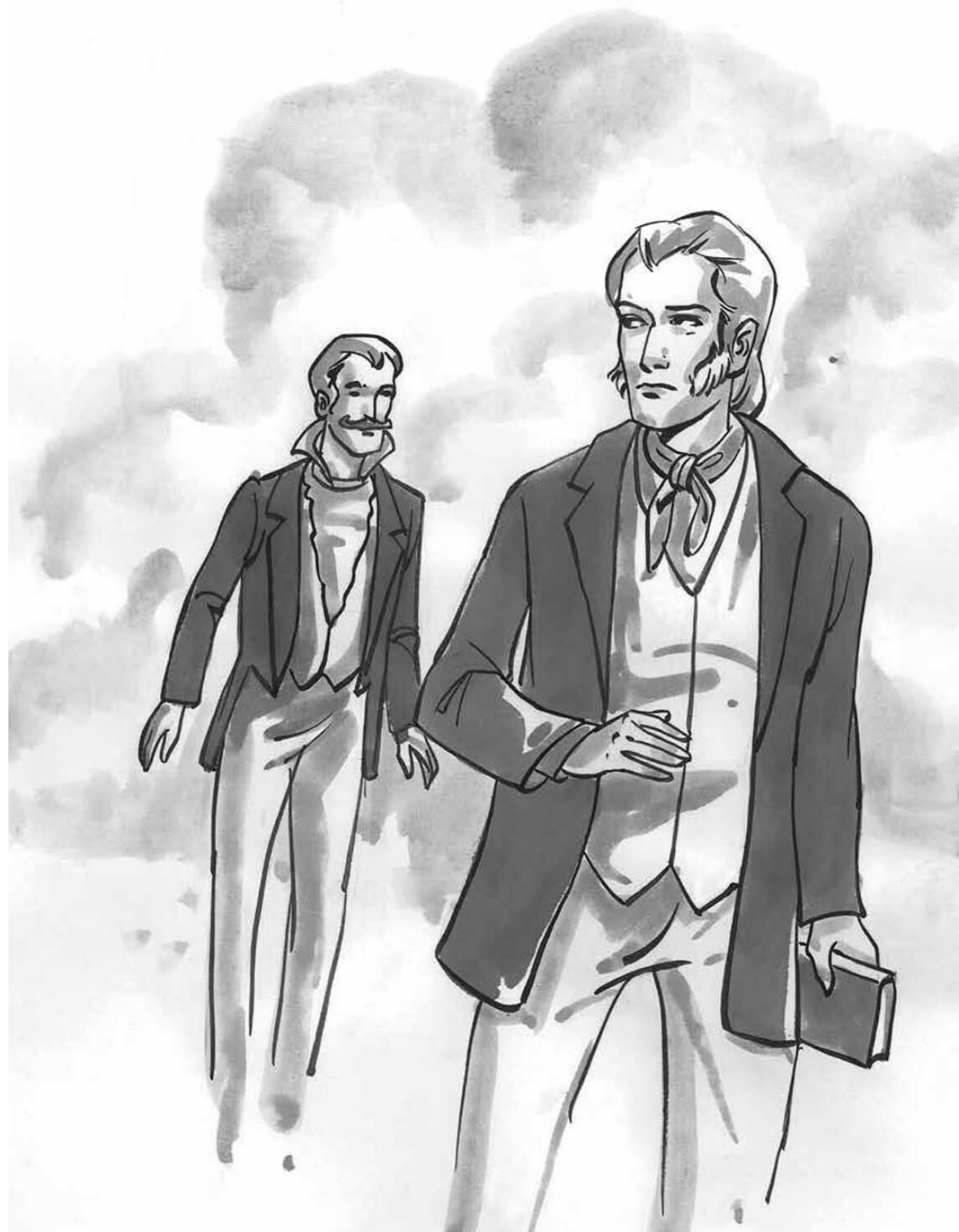
I loved Dora very much, there was no doubt about that. However, there were often times when I wished that my wife would take a greater interest in helping me around the house. I even asked Aunt Betsey to try and talk some sense into her, but my Aunt categorically declined. "You chose your own wife and you chose her with all her flaws too, Trot. Now you will have to deal with them yourself. If need be, I'd suggest trying to explain all this to her yourself if you must." She was right. I knew all of this about Dora, and I had no business in appearing to be disappointed.

Meanwhile, I also had to look after the finances and therefore I continued with my work efficiently. I had discovered that I could write somewhat well, and I started writing little articles for the newspapers and dailies and that earned me a decent sum of money. I kept my promise to Dr. Strong and resigned from the position of his secretary.

In the days to come, little did I realise that Dora's refusal to take over the household matters from me should be the least of my concerns. Dora's health had started failing rapidly. Those nimble feet which ran around the house the entire day playing with Jip, had started to grow weak, right till the time they could hardly support her little weight. I would have to carry her down the stairs every morning and then even carry her upstairs every evening. And as time flew, I even felt her to be lighter than she used to be earlier. Aunt Betsey did all she could do to tend to Dora and nursed her tirelessly every day, but her health just kept deteriorating.

I was filled with dread. I had started fearing the worst!





Chapter Thirteen

Mysteries Galore

One evening, as I was returning home from work, lost in my thoughts about Dora and her ailments, I was suddenly summoned by a man standing behind me. He mentioned that his lady had asked after me and I agreed to go with him to his mistress at once. We went into a hotel that I had crossed just a few minutes back and I was led into a room where Mrs. Steerforth was waiting for me.

The old dignified lady looked angry and tense at the same time, as she asked me, “Do you have any news of Emily?”

I was a little taken aback by the mention of Emily’s name since I had heard it after a long, long time. However, I promptly answered, “How would I know? As far as my knowledge goes, she had run away from Yarmouth with Steerforth. She should be with him right now.”

Mrs. Steerforth scoffed at my reply and informed me, “That was a long time back. After having trapped my son in her scheming web, she has now left him too and run away. No one knows where she is, and as far as I am concerned, I hope that little witch is dead.”

“Do you know anything about Emily that will help us find her? Her family and friends are very worried about her and they are looking all over for her,” I declared in haste. The very thought of Mr. Peggotty travelling all over the world came to my mind at once.

Mrs. Steerforth fell into the sofa that was behind her and began, “Well, you know how she made a fool of my innocent son, and then she fled with him to Europe, along with Littimer. At first, poor James was quite in awe of

her, but she soon started getting very anxious about what was happening with her life. James came to his senses soon enough and left her somewhere in Italy, asking her to marry Littimer, someone more in her own class.”

I felt a sharp pain grow in my heart. The very thought of poor Emily alone like that troubled me greatly. Mrs. Steerforth continued, “She started throwing her tantrums when James left her, and Littimer had no option but to lock her up in her room. She escaped from the window and was never heard of again. James is now in Spain, living his life the way he should.”

I was quite amazed at the turn of events. I prayed for Emily’s safety, but then I was quite unclear as to why Mrs. Steerforth had sent for me, since clearly she had more information about both Emily and James than I did. When I put forward the same question to her, she snapped back, “Well, find her quickly, and make sure that she does not come anywhere near my son again.”

I was now growing quite livid at the way in which Mrs. Steerforth was talking of Emily and I replied with a hint of anger, “I have the highest regard for James for he is one of my closest friends. But I have known Emily ever since she was a little girl and she is like one of my own family. If anyone is at fault here, it is only your son!” And so saying, I left there in a huff.

I was greatly concerned for Emily as I resumed my journey back home. Just as I was nearing my house, I suddenly saw a figure walk past me. She looked amazingly familiar and I started to chase after her. She must have sensed someone following her and therefore looked back to make certain. It was then that I saw her face clearly for the first time. It was Martha, Emily’s friend who had come to ask her for help when Steerforth and I had visited Yarmouth together for the first time.



I tried my very best to catch up with her, but I lost her in the the large crowd that had gathered on the streets. Distraught that I had lost one more person who could have perhaps given me some clue as to Emily's whereabouts, I headed into an inn close by to warm myself for a while.

I was busy drinking my coffee and replaying in my mind all that had just happened, when suddenly a gust of snow blew into the inn as someone walked in. I glanced in that direction and saw an old man walk in. I recognised him at once. I rushed up to him and taking him in my arms, I said, "There couldn't have been a better time to have found you, Mr. Peggotty. Where have you been?"

The old man, who looked more old since the time that I had last seen him, was thoroughly overjoyed on seeing me like this and as we sat down for a cup of coffee, he told me, "I have travelled on foot through France and Italy and had even crossed into Switzerland. I just came back to look for Emily once more in London, after which I shall soon go forth to Germany and continue my search for my little niece."

I then went on to tell him all that I had found out from Mrs. Steerforth, and I also told him about spotting Martha sometime back on the street. Mr. Peggotty was naturally very excited on hearing these developments and he got up at once and told me, "Follow me... I may just about know where Martha is!"

We were back on the snow covered streets of London, pushing our way through the huge crowds of people. Mr. Peggotty led me through a seedy part of town, as he said, "I too have seen Martha before in London. I know where she lives."

We were about to cross a bridge that ran over a canal, when suddenly I noticed something in the marshes. Pointing it out to Mr. Peggotty, we both rushed in that direction, cutting through the sea weed that had been growing along the damp marshy land. Just as she was about to jump into the canal, Mr. Peggotty and I were able to hold Martha back and we pulled her up to dry land.



As soon as Martha was able to realise what had happened, she broke down and started crying hysterically. Mr. Peggotty took off a shawl and spread it all over the quivering scared girl as we tried to comfort her. "I was afraid that everyone would think that it was my fault. Emily always helped me, she did everything that she could to help me, and here I am, unable to help her own family find her. I would do anything that I can to reunite her with her family and see her happy once again."

Mr. Peggotty then bent over Martha and said, "I have searched for her everywhere, my child, and yet I have found nothing. But I do believe that she will surely come back to her own country some day. And in case you do get to know something about her, please do let me, or Mas'r Davy here know about it."

Martha nodded her head and I knew that her intentions were genuine. She confirmed, "The moment I get any news of Emily, I'll take her in myself and then come and warn you." Both Mr. Peggotty and I were satisfied with Martha's words and we decided that it would be best for us to wait for things to unfold.

A few days later, Tommy Traddles came to visit me. He said that he had been receiving rather angry mails from Mr. Micawber. I mentioned Mrs. Micawber's letters to me and we both agreed that something serious must have happened for the old man to react this way.

Suddenly, the door flung open and Mr. Micawber himself walked in. He was absolutely livid and his face was completely flushed. "I have had enough! Enough I tell you," he screamed as he started pacing up and down the room. Both Tommy and I looked on, completely taken aback by Mr. Micawber's sudden appearance. "I have served him in every way that he has asked me to, and I have just about had my fill of it. That scoundrel, that rattlesnake, that Heep... I will not spare him, I will not rest till I see the very end of him." It almost seemed that Mr. Micawber was completely unaware of our presence there. He just continued talking without even stopping to tell us anything more.

Finally, after he managed to calm down just a little bit, he turned to both Tommy and me and said, "Come and meet me at the Canterbury Hotel one week from now. I will bring information, oh I will bring all the proof that you require. Just wait and watch the fun! You, Copperfield, bring your Aunt and Mr. Dick too with you and Mr. Traddles, I rely on you to come and help me

in unmasking that crooked traitor.” And so saying, Mr. Micawber stormed out of the house, leaving us completely baffled and aghast.



Chapter Fourteen

Good News At Last

In the coming days I was completely lost in Mr. Micawber's words and waited impatiently for the week to come to a close. I had been hoping for a long time to find some way in which Uriah Heep could be exposed, and I was hoping that Mr. Micawber would perhaps be able to use his position as Heep's confidential clerk and help bring matters to a close with the scoundrel.

I was just walking down the road one day, very close to my house, when suddenly I heard someone calling out to me. It was Martha, and I saw her running up to me, completely out of breath. "Mas'r Davy, I need you to come with me at once. I had gone to inform Mr. Peggotty at his address, but he was not there. I have left word for him to join us, but we need to hurry at once."

I did not ask any more questions so as to not waste more time and just started walking along with Martha. She led me through a long distance, till we reached a poverty ridden area, where houses that had earlier been made for the rich now lay occupied by the poor in their dilapidated condition.

Martha led me to one of the buildings there and she asked me to follow her up the stairs. We had not gone up very far, when suddenly, Mr. Peggotty rushed up beside me, almost as if he were in a trance. Seeing him sprint like that, Martha and I too started running after him.

We reached a door which was slightly ajar and I rushed in and swung it wide open, only to find an unconscious Emily lying in Mr. Peggotty's arms. Looking at me, the man joyously declared, "God is great, Mas'r Davy! He has finally reunited me with my dear darling niece. Help me carry her back

home, Mas'r Davy!" I did as I was asked.





The next day, Mr. Peggotty paid my Aunt and me a visit at our home. He sat us down by the garden and said, "Emily told me about everything that happened to her after she left that scoundrel in Italy. She managed to escape from there and made her way back to England. She fell very ill in between, but a kind old lady nursed her back to health. She spent a long time in France, waiting tables at an inn so that she could make enough money to pay for the steamer to London. She had met Martha and learnt how I was still chasing after her and that just made her feel so guilty, that she refused to meet me. Thanks to Martha, I have now been reunited with my neice."

Aunt Betsey could not hold back her tears on hearing Emily's story and it was difficult for me too, to not feel Emily's pain all through this time. As Mr. Peggotty finished telling his tale, I asked him, "So what plans do you have now? What will you do now that Emily is back?"

Mr. Peggotty sat down quietly for a while and then said, "I think I'll go off to Australia, with Emily, you know. Maybe start life all over again. I think that would be the best thing for us to do. Could I ask you for one more favour, Mas'r Davy?"

"Sure, my dear old friend, you can ask me for anything," I replied at once. "Would you mind coming back with me to Yarmouth and help me settle the affiars there? It would really mean a lot to me," the old man declared hopefully.

Dora was doing a little better these days and Aunt Betsey assured me that she would take care of my little wife. I therefore consented to go to Yarmouth with Mr. Peggotty and handle everything there.

A few days later, I stood on the beach, staring at the empty boat house. Every single piece of furniture that had once made it home was now gone, waiting to be shipped to London and from there to Australia. Mr. Peggotty was ready to leave, and I just stood there, looking at my old room, now empty to its very core. Even the small jug with the seaweed in it was now gone. I remembered my first visit to Yarmouth, I remembered my mother's marriage to Mr. Murdstone and all the years of suffering I had to endure after that, and I remembered little Emily and I running along the shore, collecting shells. How time had flown, and today, that very same house was completely barren, its doors hanging open.



Chapter Fifteen

Taken Down

By the time I came back from Yarmouth, it was already time for us all to head towards Canterbury to keep our appointment with Mr. Micawber. All of us wanted to bring Uriah Heep to justice and therefore, we were more than glad to offer Mr. Micawber any help that we could offer in this good cause.

We were all assembled in the hotel, when Mr. Micawber paid us a visit. He seemed to be rather excited and said, "Everything has been arranged, Heep will not be able to deceive us any longer." He then laid down the plan before us. We were all supposed to wait for some time, before reaching the offices of Wickfield and Heep. That, Mr. Micawber said, would give him enough time to get his plan into motion.

We did as we were asked to and soon we were all at Mr. Wickfield's office. Mr. Micawber let us all in, and keeping with his plot, he pretended surprise on seeing us. Hearing our voices at the door, Uriah Heep came there as well and on seeing us, his jaw dropped. Clearly he was not happy to find me there. We had not met all this while since I had slapped him at Mr. Wickfield's house.

Being the devil that he was, he decided to deal with us directly and turning to Mr. Micawber he said, "Get out of the room, right now!" But when Mr. Micawber did not move, Heep angrily yelled at him, "Have you turned deaf? Did you not hear what I just said?"

Mr. Micawber coolly replied, "I think I'm just going to stand here because I want to stand here."

Uriah Heep's face lit up in rage. And then he took one good look around

at all the faces that were present there in the room with him and he went pale with anxiety and fright. "I see now, I see it clearly enough... you have all ganged up against me!" he screamed.

Tommy Traddles, who was sitting right next to Uriah Heep began in a most calm, businesslike fashion, "Mr. Heep, let me inform you first that I am here representing the interests of Mr. Wickfield. Therefore, I would request you to be calm and let me speak of what I have to say to you today."

Uriah Heep scowled at Tommy and angrily barked, "You did it by fraud, you tricked that drunk old fool into representing him. I can understand it all now."

Tommy only smiled at Heep's angry response and said, "I think it would be best for you to calm down Mr. Heep, since you know well enough that there have been several things that have been obtained from Mr. Wickfield by treachery."



Heep was now silent, knowing fully well that Tommy was referring to him. Mr. Micawber then came forward and pulled out a piece of paper. He said that as Heep's confidential clerk, he had seen Uriah Heep forge Mr. Wickfield's signature. He also brought out several fraudulent books of accounts that Heep had made Mr. Micawber maintain, and then charge Mr. Wickfield for all these false bills. Mr. Micawber also said that he had enough solid proof to show that Heep had actually stolen all the money that my Aunt had invested in the bank that crashed, leaving her virtually penniless.

Tommy now stood up and in the most cold and calm way possible, told Uriah Heep, "I think it is best for us all if you give back all the money that you stole. There is enough evidence against you."

Uriah Heep did not know which way to run after Mr. Micawber's exposé, but he still hissed, "Try and make me give back that money, you mangy dog!"

Tommy now edged closer to Heep and said, "Then I suggest Mr. Micawber call the police. We'll get our money while you languish in jail."

"No, don't do that... I'll give it all back," Uriah Heep pleaded, knowing that there was no other way out for him. Mr. Micawber smiled in triumph. He had finally been able to bring Uriah Heep to justice. "You are to go inside and sit there till we decide what to do with you," Traddles instructed Uriah Heep.

We were all very happy to see the end of Heep. But there was no one more happy in the entire room than Mr. Micawber. Finally, his wife would get back the same loving husband that she had always had, and Mr. Micawber felt he should find a way of starting his life all over again.

Aunt Betsey then came up with a fantastic suggestion. She asked Mr. Micawber to move to Australia, along with Mr. Peggotty and see how life treated him in a different country, far away from here. Mr. Micawber too, felt that it was a splendid idea and he humbly accepted the money that Aunt Betsey offered him to pay for his passage to the Land Down Under.



Chapter Sixteen

Silence!

The doctors had finally given up, and however much I did not want to believe their words, it was clear enough for me to see. Dora was not going to survive for much longer.

One night, she summoned me to her side and said, “I was not a good choice to make for a bride, David. I never could do all that is expected of a wife. And perhaps it is best that I go this way, for I know how much you love me and that you would never have left me otherwise.”

I started crying hysterically. It was too much for me to take. “Dora, my dear darling Dora, please do not talk like this. Nothing will happen to you. The doctors will be able to make you better again.”

“David,” Dora said, smiling through her pain, “I may not know how to cook, or keep the household accounts, but I do know what is the truth and what is not. I need to speak to Agnes once. Would you please ask her to join me?”

I left Dora’s bedroom, heart-broken and completely crushed, as Agnes went in to speak to Dora. Jip continued to dance around me, fearful that something bad was going to happen. He begged me to take him to Dora, but I sat down by the fireplace and shook my head at him. “Later Jip, we’ll go up again, later!” Jip merely sat down at my feet and lay there motionless. It was after quite some time that I realised he was no more.

Agnes came down in the wee hours of the morning. She had been with Dora right till the very end. She did not tell me that herself, but one look at her face and I knew.

I managed Dora's affairs quickly enough, and yet I was a completely broken and changed man. Aunt Betsey felt that it would be best for me to travel abroad for a while, till I got my bearings back. But there was still some work left at Canterbury and Mr. Peggotty still had some time before taking the ship for Australia. I decided that I would wait for some more time before finally leaving for some foreign destination.



My Aunt and I then travelled to Canterbury to finally see how Tommy Traddles and Mr. Micawber were dealing with the entire Uriah Heep fiasco. We were surprised to find Tommy hiding behind an entire table stacked high with papers. As we greeted him, he smiled at us and said, "Heep was quite the scamster. I could just sit here for months and keep trying to unravel his spurious accounts. But from the looks of it, all is not lost. Mr. Wickfield will still be able to keep most of his money and his business." Agnes was naturally very pleased to hear this bit of information.

Tommy then turned to my Aunt and said, "And Miss Betsey, you have been saved completely. All your money was still with Uriah Heep. He didn't invest it anywhere per se, but he just held on to it here since he wanted to teach David a lesson." My Aunt, though relived, hissed, "Oh that monster!"

Peggotty had come down to visit me in London as soon as she heard of Dora's death, and decided to stay on with me for quite some time. But I would often notice that she always remained quite worried. When I asked her finally, she confessed that she was worried about Ham, who had stayed on at Yarmouth. He had been quite happy to know that Emily was safe and sound, yet he was sad about the fact that she was indeed going away to Australia.

I knew that Peggotty's concerns were justified and therefore I decided to go to Yarmouth and check on Ham. When I finally reached there, a massive thunderstorm was coming down on the small sea port. As I rushed to find Ham and also some shelter, I saw that a huge crowd of fishermen had gathered by the sea shore.

Intrigued, I too walked over towards them and tried to see what was happening. Apparently, a schooner was trying to dock into Yarmouth, but the stormy weather and rough seas were not allowing it to come any closer. And even as we were standing there, a huge wave came and drenched the boat completely. We watched in shock as the main mast just broke like a stick under the pressure. "It won't make it. And I think I can see someone on board... there, look, it's a man wearing a red cap!" one of the fisherman screamed.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, one man just came running forward and it was clear to us all that he was going to go into the sea to save that sailor on board the schooner. "That's just suicide. No one can make it through these tough breakers," the fisherman there all screamed in unison. I too was quite alarmed for the safety of the man, when suddenly I saw his face clearly. It was Ham!

I rushed towards him and tried to hold on to him. “Ham, you’re just being crazy! You cannot do this, you know you won’t be able to save that man on the boat!”

Ham’s jovial face lit up on seeing me, just like it had the first time when I had come to Yarmouth in my youth and he said, “Mas’r Davy, we can’t be too sure about that now, can we? If the Lord wants me to live, then so be it.” And so saying, he tied a long rope around his waist and rushed into the sea.

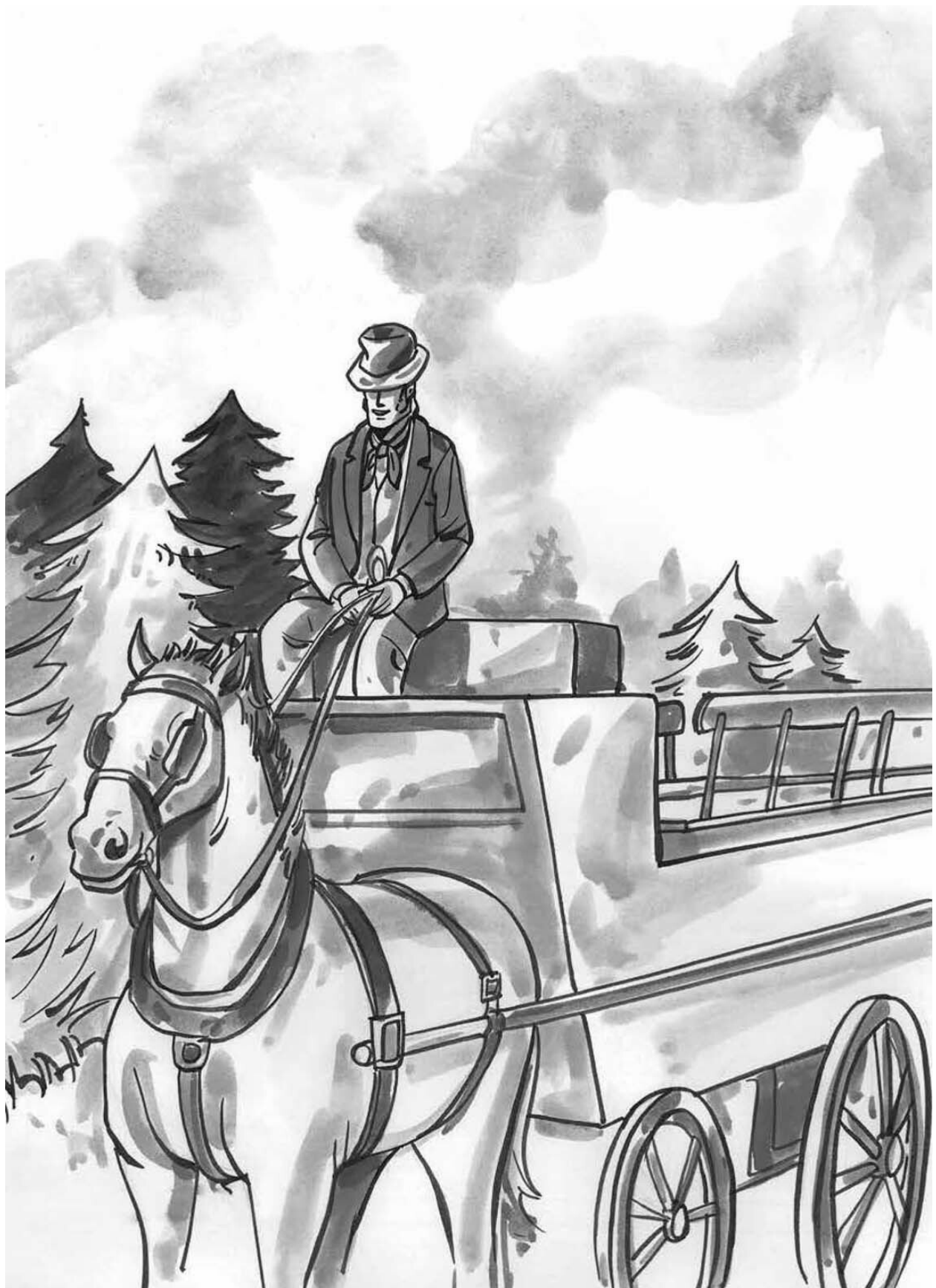
He couldn’t make it past even the first wave and was struck back to the shore. I could see his face bleed from the impact, but he did not give up. He picked himself up and rushed back into the water. We just stood there in horror as Ham disappeared from our sight. After some time, when he did not resurface, the fisherman gathered there pulled on the rope. They brought back Ham’s lifeless body to the shore.

I started howling in agony. Ham had always been kind to me, he had always taken care of me, and yet here I was, holding on to his deceased head in my hands. I could not believe that Ham was no more.

Suddenly, I felt a tap on my shoulder. A fisherman who knew me right from my childhood came up behind me with a grim expression and said, “If you may, Mas’r Davy, I think you might want to see this.” I was too much in shock to process what the man was telling me and therefore, I just got up and started walking behind him.

There was a crowd gathered around something on the the beach and as soon as I reached there, everyone made way for me to go ahead. And there I saw it — he was lying on his stomach, with his turned head resting comfortably on his arm. I noticed the red cap on his head. He was the sailor on board that sinking schooner. James Steerforth now lay there on the beach in his favourite sleeping position, dead.





Chapter Seventeen

Agnes Comes Back

Peggotty and I went to see off her brother, Emily and Mr. and Mrs. Micawber on their way to Australia. We had already decided to keep the news of Ham and Steerforth's death to ourselves and not ruin the joyous departure of the Peggottys.

Now that all the loose ends had already been tied up, I decided to leave England for some time and take care of my own health. I travelled for three years, and used this time to write. Tommy Traddles acted almost like my agent in London and he saw to it that all my articles got published.

I finally returned to London, glad to be back home. In all these three years, Agnes and I had grown very close to each other. She had written to me continuously and I had much appreciated how she had started a small school for girls. I wondered whether Agnes was married or not, for I felt attracted to her in a certain way.

I confided my feelings to Peggotty and then Aunt Betsey. She listened to me calmly and replied, "I had always hoped that one day you would speak to me in such detail about Agnes. You know that I have always been extremely fond of her."

I was a little taken aback at Aunt Betsey's words. Encouraged, I dared to ask her, "Is she married, Aunty?" Aunt Betsey immediately informed me, "No, but I did ask her about her marriage plans. She just told me that she was waiting for some man to propose to her. Maybe you can get her to give you his name."

I took courage in Aunt Betsey's words and drove to Canterbury the very

next day with her. To tell the truth, I was also a little apprehensive. I wondered what Agnes would have to say about the mystery man in her life.



As always, I was overjoyed when I first saw Agnes, her cheerful face making me forget all my problems. We spoke at length about my travels, my writing and she told me everything about her little school.

Finally, I took some courage and asked, "Aunt Betsey tells me that you are waiting for some man, my dear Agnes, to come and marry you! Won't you tell me who he is?"

Instead of telling me anything, Agnes started to sob. I was a little amazed at this and asked her what was wrong. Had I offended her in some way? "No Trot, it's not your fault," she began, "But after so many years, I thought you would finally come and tell me the words that I wanted to hear."

It was me! She had been refusing all her marriage alliances because she had always been in love with me. Stunned, I mumbled, "Since when, dear Agnes?" "Since forever, Trot! It has always been you. Which is why perhaps, the day she died, Dora called me and asked me to marry you. She must have seen it in my eyes."

I too started sobbing. "My dear darling Agnes," I finally managed to say, "I don't quite know what to tell you. You have always been there with me, in my ups and my downs, and you have always stood by me at every step of my life. I just didn't realise that you would want to marry me, since you knew so much about me already."

Holding her hand, I walked up to Aunt Betsey and told her that Agnes and I wanted to get married. My Aunt was so happy on hearing this news that she started crying with joy. She was so loud that Peggotty and Mr. Dick came running to ask whether anything was wrong.

Finally, my life had come a full circle. I had known the happiness that I had always wanted to find in my life. Agnes and I lived the rest of our lives in peace and joy, along with our three children. My Aunt was now a godmother to my daughter, a little Betsey Trotwood. She might have turned eighty, but she could still walk six miles a day without stopping to rest.

Peggotty became the nurse to my children and I would see her wrinkled fat finger scolding my children, the same way as she had scolded me. And one day, I noticed my children reading to her about "crokindills"!

Mr. Peggotty came to visit us once and told us how well they had all settled down in Australia. He was now a rich cattle farmer and Emily had started a small unit to take care of the ill. She also worked on the farm and taught children in her spare time. She had heard of Ham's death much later,

and she did have a silent prayer to say for the poor soul.

Mr. Micawber had finally found his rightful place in the world. He was now a magistrate in Australia and was treated as the respectable man that he was.



As my beautiful wife Agnes and I stand by our house, we see our children running around the garden, playing with an old man who flies a huge seven foot kite from time to time. Mr. Dick still keeps up with Dr. Strong, who has finally made some progress with his dictionary. He is now on the letter 'D'.

I am now a popular writer, having made quite a name for myself with my books. Finally, happiness is mine and I intend to keep it with me for a long, long time.

About the Author

■ Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, to John and Elizabeth Dickens. His father, a clerk in the Naval Pay Office, was imprisoned for debt. Charles, then, was put to work at Warren's Blacking Factory until his father was released and finally rescued him. Between 1824 and 1827, Dickens read at a school in London and when he turned fifteen, he was employed as an office boy at an attorney's office.

It is well-known that his turbulent times were the source of his creative inspiration – and they emerge most strongly in his works *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. After the success of his *The Pickwick Papers*, Dickens chose to be a full-time novelist, though still contributing through his journalistic and editorial services.

In 1859, Dickens began a new weekly in London, called *All the Year Round*. The first installment of *A Tale of Two Cities* came in the first edition of the weekly and continued for many months till the finish. He continued to write great gems in English Literature that are read and praised till date and always will be. Till his very end, Dickens held the editorial responsibility of *All the Year Round*, held readings and wrote his novels.

His final reading was in London in 1870, and he suffered a massive stroke on June 8 and passed away on June 9. He was buried at Westminster Abbey on June 14.

■ Characters

David Copperfield: The protagonist. He endures a tough life, tackling his hardships with optimism. Also called ‘Trot’, is a helpful, well-mannered and intelligent boy who loses his parents very early in life and is ill-treated by his step-father. It is his Aunt Betsey who raises him and stays as his guardian, along with David’s old nurse, Peggotty.

Clara Copperfield: She is David’s mother who gets married early, remarries a terrible man and dies soon after having a baby, leaving a young son at the mercy of his step-father.

Betsey Trotwood: David’s aunt, who raises an ill-treated David, rescues him from his merciless step-father and a life of child labour. She is a woman of strong notions and principles, wise in the ways of the world, and extremely kind at heart

Edward Murdstone: David’s cruel step-father who mistreats him, Clara and Peggotty. Later he is joined by his unmarried sister, Jane Murdstone and the two send David away, to London, to fend for his own livelihood. David’s awful childhood is all because of Edward Murdstone.

Peggotty: David’s ever loyal and affectionate nurse. She, like Aunt Betsey, continues to support and be with David all through his hardships. In the absence of David’s mother it is Peggotty, with her golden heart, and Aunt Betsey who give David the love of a family. David too hold Peggotty dearest of his heart and is always there for her when she needed any help.

James Steerforth : A childhood friend of David’s, who guides and saves him in his first boarding school, Salem House, where David is initially sent to be punished and disciplined on the instructions of Mr. Murdstone. James reappears in David’s life later again, helping him in making a career choice, and influencing a very important twist in David’s life.

Daniel Peggotty: The large-hearted brother of Peggotty, he had adopted both Ham and Emily when they were young, and always treated them like his own family. Always warm and kind to one and all, Mr. Peggotty stands true to his determination and courage, whenever it has been demanded of him.

Uriah Heep: A sinister character with a ‘freckled’ face and sweaty hands, Heep is an evil villain, who leads to the financial ruin of Aunt Betsey, Mr. Wickfield and many more. Greedy and a fraudster, Uriah Heep always hated David from the first time they ever met and wanted to harm him. He is a stone cold character, who has no human emotion at all.

Mr. & Mrs. Micawber: An unlucky couple who mostly lived in poor financial conditions, they are David’s landlords when he is sent to work for a living in London after his mother’s death. Though quite poor, the Micawbers are very kind to David and look after him to the best of their abilities. The Micawbers play an important part in David’s life much later again, particularly in exposing Uriah Heep.

Agnes Wickfield: The wise and beautiful daughter of Mr. Wickfield. She is a dutiful daughter and a loyal friend to David. Agnes is always there when David needs her the most and continues to counsel him when needed.

Dora Spenlow: The first wife and the true love of David. Dora is immature and childlike, but she loves David dearly. However, she meets with a terrible tragedy very early in her married life.

Questions

Chapter 1

- Who is Ms. Betsey Trotwood? How is she related to David Copperfield?
- Aunt Betsey scared the pregnant Clara Copperfield. Describe the incident briefly?

Chapter 2

- How does Edward Murdstone change the lives of David, Clara and Peggotty?

Chapter 3

- David makes two very good friends at Salem House. What are their names and how do they help David?

Chapter 4

- When David goes home in the holidays, he notices two new additions in the house. Who are they?

Chapter 5

- Why is David sent away to London and by whom? Where does he live?
- How does David escape from the city of London? Where does he go?
- What was Aunt Betsey's reaction to David's escape? Does she give him shelter?

Chapter 6

- David's life takes a turn for the better. How?
- What is David's description of Uriah Heep? Does he like him?

Chapter 7

- David meets a childhood friend at the inn after a long time. Who is he and how does this friend help David in making a career choice?

Chapter 8

- Name the firm where David works and describe the work he does.
- During an office party David meets an old acquaintance. Describe the person and the meeting.

Chapter 9

- Soon after Barkis' death, David and Peggotty receive another bad news. What had happened?

Chapter 10

- How does David come to realise that Dora Spenlow also liked him?
- What bothers Agnes Wickfield and why?
- Tommy Traddles helps David a lot in his troubles. How does he help him?

Chapter 11

- What was Dora's reaction when David tried to explain his problems to her?
- What evil ambitions of Uriah Heep are unveiled in the chapter '*Villain*'?

Chapter 12

- How do you rate Dora as a housewife? Does she understand David's problems?

Chapter 13

- What is the mystery surrounding James Steerforth and Emily?
- Where do Mr. Peggotty and David meet? What do they discuss?

Chapter 14

- How is Emily found? And what favour does Peggotty ask of David?
- Which place does Mr. Peggotty decide to go away to?

Chapter 15

- Describe the entire drama that takes place when Uriah Heep is '*Taken Down*'?

- Aunt Betsey gave a suggestion to Mr. Micawber and he accepted it. What was the suggestion?

Chapter 16

- In her last moments whom did Dora want to see? How does David bear with Dora's death?
- Aunt Betsey and David go to Canterbury and meet Tommy. What news does he give them?
- David witnesses two deaths of his beloved people after Dora's death. Who are the ones who die and how?

Chapter 17

- What does David do to unburden himself and what way does his career shape up?
- What decisions are taken by David and Aunt Betsey regarding Agnes? Does Agnes agree to the proposal?

DAVID COPPERFIELD

Charles Dickens

When David Copperfield is born, he is welcomed into a loving family — a mother, who adores her son and a dear nurse, who loves him like her own child. But when David's mother marries Mr Murdstone, everything changes.

David is sent away to a boarding school, his mother passes away and then Mr Murdstone sends David to London, so that the ten-year old can earn his own livelihood. But David never gives up. Tackling life's struggles with maturity and courage, David Copperfield fights the odds, with the few people who love him, till he achieves his rightful place in the world.

A tale of innocence, courage, love and hope, David Copperfield is a must read!



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